

LIGHTHOUSE  
REPORTS

2021

L

ANNUAL  
REPORT

# FOREWORD

One of the reasons for founding an organisation is that you have become convinced of an idea that needs to be put into practice. At Lighthouse, our founding conviction was that a small, interdisciplinary investigations team could have an outsized impact on European public interest journalism.

At the time there were some clear trends in non-profit journalism towards organisations built around individual specialisms, such as financial investigative journalists or open-source investigators; and national newsrooms, such as Disclose in France or The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, in the UK. But we wanted to be resolutely European and interdisciplinary and to top it off we wanted to do it without investing scarce resources on a public-facing platform and brand.

Being polite, it wasn't obvious to everyone that this approach would work. It might seem like common sense to be skeptical about the fit between a small team, broad skills and a big canvas. However, during the course of 2021 any doubts that we had as founders were largely answered.

You can be convinced that splicing specialisms like money trails and FOI, or data science and OSINT will be effective but you need to build the interdisciplinary team before you can prove the concept. This was the year where capacity began to meet conviction and we could see some of the added value we anticipated in the intersection between different specialisms.

In our marquee investigation into Europe's Shadow Armies, we saw ground reporting provide clues which could be verified by OSINT approaches and FOI work and observed how the results of

months of investigation could then break across the continent through a network of media partners to deliver impact at scale and in multiple languages. We saw a small Lighthouse team lead a cross-border group of journalists from online and print outlets to prestige broadcasters. We saw journalists whose hard-won local knowledge finally delivered the big story thanks to technical assistance they could never get from their own newsrooms. Teams were forged, trust emerged. It works.

It's worth underlining that the Lighthouse approach is not a rejection of houses of specialism nor of national champions of investigative journalism. We partner regularly with the best of both camps.

No single organisation or outlet can deliver an authentically Europe-wide audience. Coalitions of non-profit and for-profit will be required to make sure that European public interest journalism actually speaks to European publics and not to national or political silos.

We are convinced that there are a host of vital public interest questions where real breakthroughs can be achieved through constant experimentation with different specialisms.

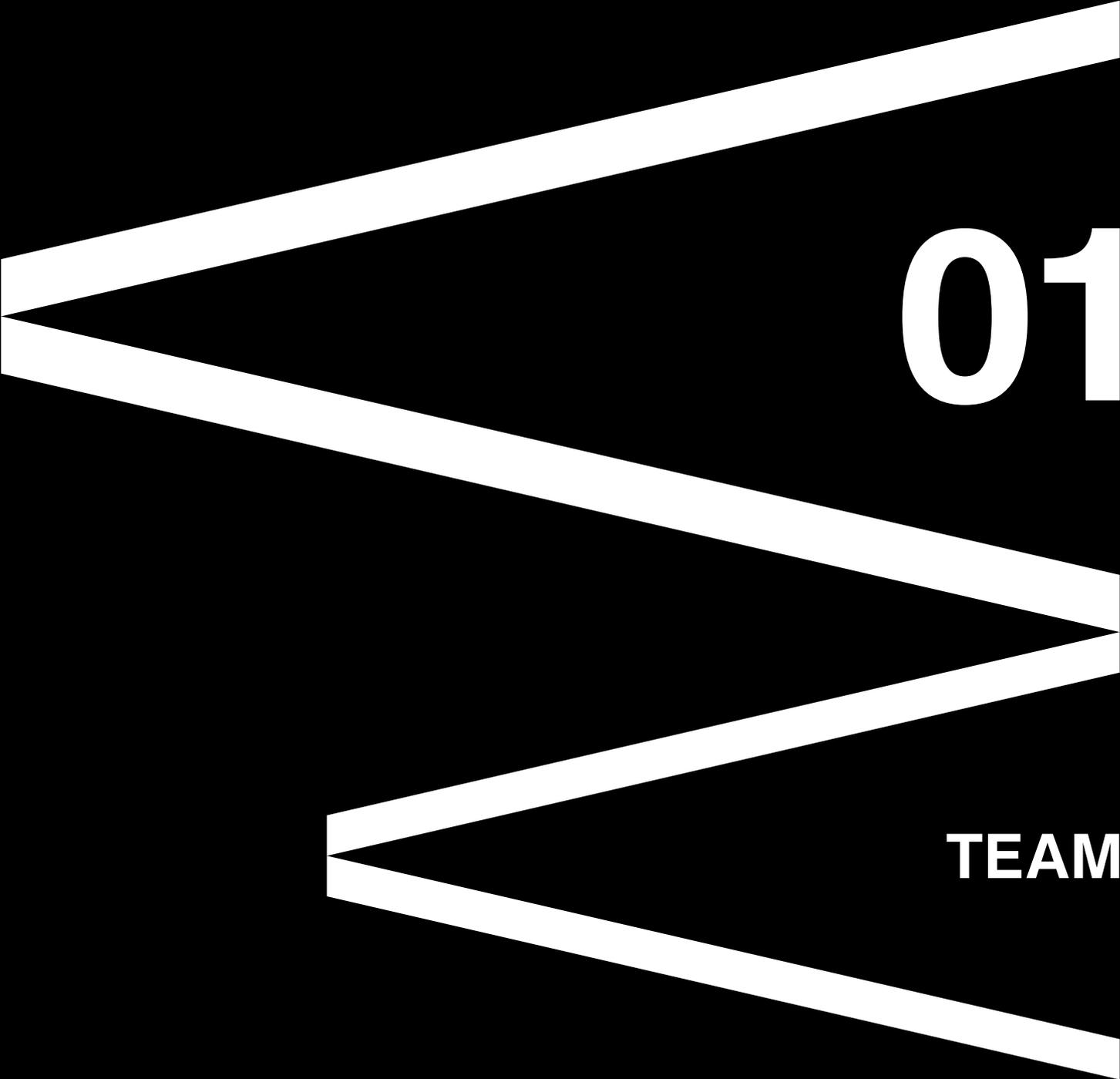
The formula will differ from topic to topic and finding it requires an interdisciplinary team that is equipped to partner effectively.

It's going to take more time and resource to explore the full potential of the investigations adaptor we are building but it's already clear that it can power accountability and change.

**Daniel Howden**  
Managing Director

# CONTENTS

<b>02</b>	<b>FOREWORD</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>TEAM</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>NEWSROOMS</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>SESSIONS</b>
<b>29</b>	<b>MEDIA PARTNERS</b>
<b>31</b>	<b>FUNDERS</b>
<b>33</b>	<b>FINANCIALS</b>
<b>35</b>	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>



01

TEAM

# DIRECTORS



**DANIEL HOWDEN**  
Managing Director

Daniel is a long-form writer and experienced editor. He has been a foreign correspondent for the Economist, the Guardian and the Independent. He's a migration expert, Visiting Fellow at Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre and was Senior Editor at Refugees Deeply. Daniel is a two-times winner of the Migration Media Award, won special mention at the inaugural True Stories Award, and finalist at the Online Journalism Awards.



**LUDO HEKMAN**  
Director

Ludo is a journalist and editor. He has worked in print, online and television, reporting from countries including Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. He has helped to pioneer new collaborative investigations into Europe's arms industry and has a keen sense for the opportunities in emerging technologies. He has won the Citigroup Excellence in Journalism award and has been nominated for several Prix Europa awards.



**KLAAS VAN DIJKEN**  
Director

Klaas concentrates on conflict areas and countries with repressive regimes including Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia. His work has been published in media worldwide. He won the Dutch De Tegel award and has been nominated for a Prix Bayeux-Calvados Award for War Reporting in France.

# CORE TEAM



**CHARLOTTE ALFRED**  
Senior Editor

Charlotte is an editor and investigative journalist working in Europe, the Middle East and the US. She was managing editor of Refugees Deeply, covered international news for HuffPost, and worked on documentaries for PBS Frontline.



**EVA CONSTANTARAS**  
Data editor

Eva is a data journalist specialized in building data journalism teams in the Global South. She was also a Google News Scholar and is a Fulbright Research Fellow.



**LIONEL FAULL**  
Investigations Editor

Lionel specialises in tracing cross-border money flows behind corruption and mass exploitation. He has more than a decade's experience as an investigative journalist, previously working for Finance Uncovered in the UK, and the amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism in South Africa.

# CORE TEAM



**MAUD JULLIEN**  
Deputy Investigations Editor

Maud was a news correspondent in Senegal and the DRC for seven years before moving to France to become a freelance documentary film-maker and a news editor-in-chief. She has worked for the BBC, Arte, France 24, TV5 Monde and started collaborating with Lighthouse Reports in 2019, investigating European arms exports. She works in both English and French and has previously written and directed documentaries for the BBC and TV5 Monde.



**CROFTON BLACK**  
Senior Reporter

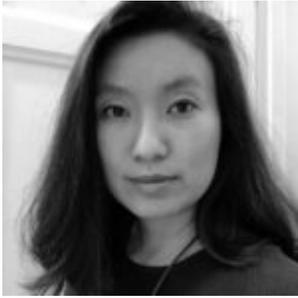
Crofton is a writer and researcher specialising in technology and security topics. His areas of focus include surveillance, military contracting and secret detention. His book *Negative Publicity: Artefacts of Extraordinary Rendition* (with Edmund Clark, Aperture 2016) won the Rencontres d'Arles Photo-Text Book Award and the International Center of Photography Infinity Award for Documentary and Photojournalism, as well as forming the basis for several international exhibitions and installations. He has a PhD in the history of philosophy from the Warburg Institute, University of London.



**TOMAS STADIUS**  
Investigative Reporter

Tomas Stadius is an investigative journalist based in Paris. Most of his work has been focused on migration and the far-right, as well as the defence and security industries. The author of two books, he is a regular contributor to *Libération*, *Mediapart*, *Le Canard Enchaîné* and *Disclose*, among others. He was the lead investigator on the #MoruroaFiles investigation on the fallout from French nuclear testing in Polynesia.

# CORE TEAM



**THIN LEI WIN**  
**Lead Reporter Food Systems**

Thin covers food and climate issues and curates her newsletter Thin Ink. She worked previously as an international correspondent for the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Born and raised in Myanmar, she's lived and worked in Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, and most recently, Italy, and has reported from many parts of Asia, Africa and Europe. In 2015, Thin returned to Myanmar after many years abroad to found and run Myanmar Now, an award-winning bilingual news agency.



**GABRIEL GEIGER**  
**Investigative Reporter**

Gabriel is a journalist specializing in surveillance and algorithmic accountability reporting. He began collaborating with Lighthouse in 2021 and before that was a regular contributor to VICE Motherboard, where he covered tech, labor, and international news.



**BASHAR DEEB**  
**OSINT investigator**

Bashar is an OSINT investigator. Much of his work has centred on different aspects of the refugee experience in Europe. He began working with Lighthouse as part of the EU Arms investigations and has since collaborated with Channel 4 and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. He retains a strong interest in his native Syria and the wider region.

# CORE TEAM



**HTET AUNG**  
**Data Scientist**

Htet is a data scientist specialized in machine learning and AI. His previous works focused on building AI models and data analytics dashboards, conducting big data projects, as well as building and mentoring data teams. His current work includes wrangling and analysing data and auditing machine learning models to find leads or further investigations.



**KATERINA STAVROULA**  
**Administrator**

Katerina is an operations specialist based in Athens. She worked previously at UNHCR, heading donor visibility and donor-related content creation in Greece. Prior to that Katerina worked as a freelance journalist in newspapers and online media and was a contributor to the award-winning Migrants Files, an international data journalism project.



**BEATRIZ RAMALHO DA SILVA**  
**Junior Investigative Reporter**

Beatriz is a journalist and researcher with work published in Al-Jazeera English and The Guardian. She was previously studying an MSc in Media Communications and Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science. During her fellowship she will focus on migration and agriculture and develop her OSINT skills.

# CORE TEAM



**JACK SAPOCH**  
Junior OSINT investigator

Jack is an OSINT investigator. His previous work has focused on the documentation of human rights abuses against migrants along the Balkan Route, working with grassroots NGOs. He also assisted investigations by Forensic Architecture and ECCHR. He is currently a masters student at Columbia University's School for International Policy and Affairs.



**HALIMA SALAT BARRE**  
FBJP Fellow

Halima Salat Barre is a journalist with a strong interest in human rights reporting. She has worked on radio, television and in print, reporting in English, Swahili and Somali. Halima brings a range of reporting experience from Kenya to the Netherlands. She has a particular interest in the intersections between migration and conflict, as well as investigative reporting on issues facing migrant communities in Europe.



**JUSTIN CASIMIR BRAUN**  
Data Fellow

Justin is a data journalist focused on the societal impact of automated systems and artificial intelligence. In the past, Justin has worked with Algorithm Watch e.V., a German digital rights organization, and various grassroots NGOs, documenting human rights violations against migrants on the Balkan Route. He holds a bachelor degree in International Relations from Stanford University.

# SUPERVISORY BOARD



**MARIA MARGARONIS**

Maria Margaronis is a writer and radio documentary maker, formerly of The Nation, now mostly working for the BBC. She has a special interest in migration and refugee issues, and in Greece and the Balkans. She is currently the chair of the Lighthouse Reports supervisory board, and is also a long-time trustee of the UK-base campaigning charity Women for Refugee Women.



**SARA STILLMAN**

Sarah Stillman is a staff writer with the New Yorker, teacher of literary non-fiction at Yale and head of the Columbia J-School's Global Migration Project.



**ANDREW FEINSTEIN**

Andrew Feinstein heads the UK-based non-profit, Shadow World Investigates and is author of 'Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade'. He was previously a campaigning MP in his native South Africa.

# SUPERVISORY BOARD



**TUESDAY REITANO**

Tuesday Reitano is the Deputy Director of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and a senior research advisor at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria. She served as a policy specialist in the UN System, including with UNDP, UNDG and the UNODC. She is the co-author of 'Migrant, Refugee; Smuggler, Saviour'.



**NANI JANSEN REVENTLOW**

Nani was the founding Director of the Digital Freedom Fund, which supports partners in Europe to advance digital rights through strategic litigation. She is a Lecturer in Law at Columbia Law School and Adjunct Professor at Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government. She is an expert in human rights litigation.



**HANS BERGWERFF**

Hans Bergwerff is a specialist advisor on Dutch tax law. Previously founded Bergwerff ten Cate, worked at Loyens & Loeff, BDO and MeesPierson. He is elected Board Treasurer of Lighthouse Reports.

# OUR

# YEAR

# IN

# STORIES

FEBRUARY  
**FRONTEX:  
AN AGENCY  
IN TURMOIL**



In partnership with



APRIL  
**WHAT PALANTIR  
IS DOING  
IN EUROPE**



In partnership with



APRIL  
**WHY DID  
DENMARK  
DECLARE  
DAMASCUS SAFE?**



In partnership with



APRIL  
**FRONTEX'S  
SECRET LINKS  
TO LIBYAN  
COASTGUARD**



In partnership with



JUNE  
**EU SPY TECH  
SERVES  
MYANMAR JUNTA**



In partnership with



SEPTEMBER  
**MORIA AFTER  
THE FIRE**



In partnership with



OCTOBER  
**UNMASKING  
EUROPE'S  
SHADOW ARMIES**



In partnership with



OCTOBER  
**SPANISH PORK  
OUT OF CONTROL**



In partnership with



OCTOBER  
**BIG MEAT  
SABOTAGES  
EU REFORMS**



In partnership with



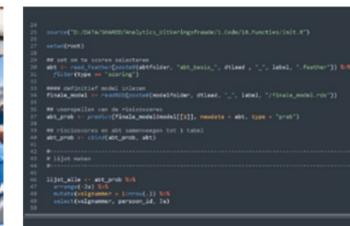
NOVEMBER  
**VACCINATING THE  
UNDOCUMENTED**



In partnership with



DECEMBER  
**UNLOCKING A  
WELFARE FRAUD  
PREDICTION  
ALGORITHM**



In partnership with

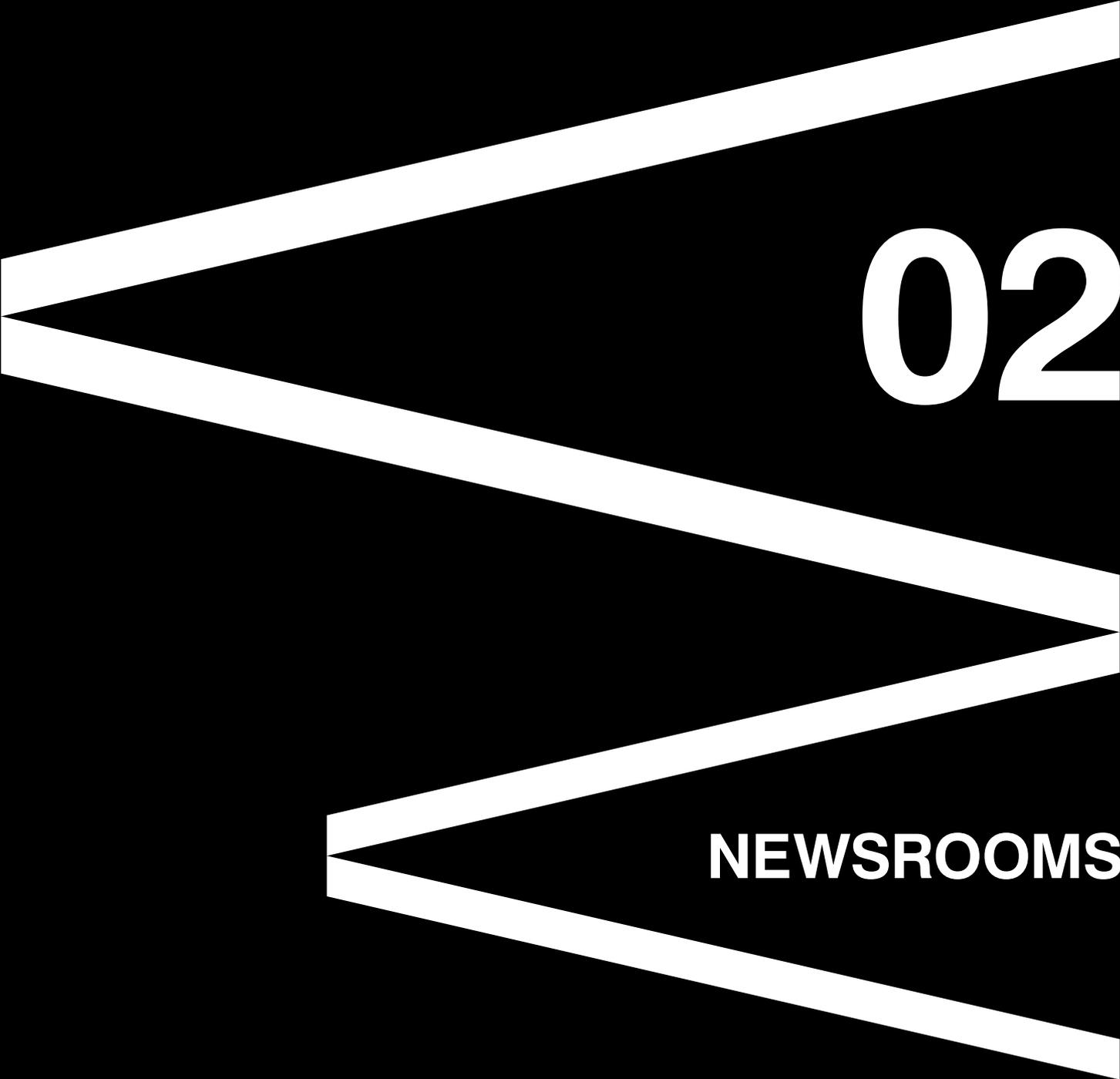


DECEMBER  
**WHO DIED  
AT EUROPE'S  
BORDERS?**



In partnership with





02

NEWSROOMS

# BORDERS



## BORDERS

Permanent changes in European norms and the abolition of fundamental rights are being rehearsed in borderlands which have become states of exception to the rule of law. These rehearsals can only take place out of the public eye, behind a layer of plausible deniability. Removing this veil requires investigations that can shock public audiences in a way that is commensurate with the scale of human rights violations at the borders.

Our investigations during the last year have been revelatory: we identified the clandestine security forces active in the forests of the Western Balkans and the Aegean Sea. We demonstrated how European governments are command and finance these shadow armies, who are responsible for often violent, illegal pushbacks and rights abuses of asylum seekers and migrants.

We also revealed the true nature and scale of EU operations through its border agency Frontex in the Central Mediterranean. Despite denials that EU authorities command and control the so-called Libyan Coast guard, we were able to demonstrate how this interception force is led and directed by EU actors. The Libyan coast guard can only intercept asylum seekers with the assistance of European state actors and Frontex planes and surveillance equipment.

In autumn 2021 the Belarusian government funnelled thousands of people from various war-torn countries to its border with the EU in a ploy to put pressure on the bloc following a diplomatic crisis. In response, Poland sealed its borders and asylum seekers found themselves in a death trap. Reports soon emerged of people missing or dead at the border, yet these people mostly remained nameless and faceless. We identified a dozen of them and relayed their stories in a bid to restore some humanity to the death toll. Their life stories captured the complex of reasons why people try to seek international protection, regardless of the potential risks.

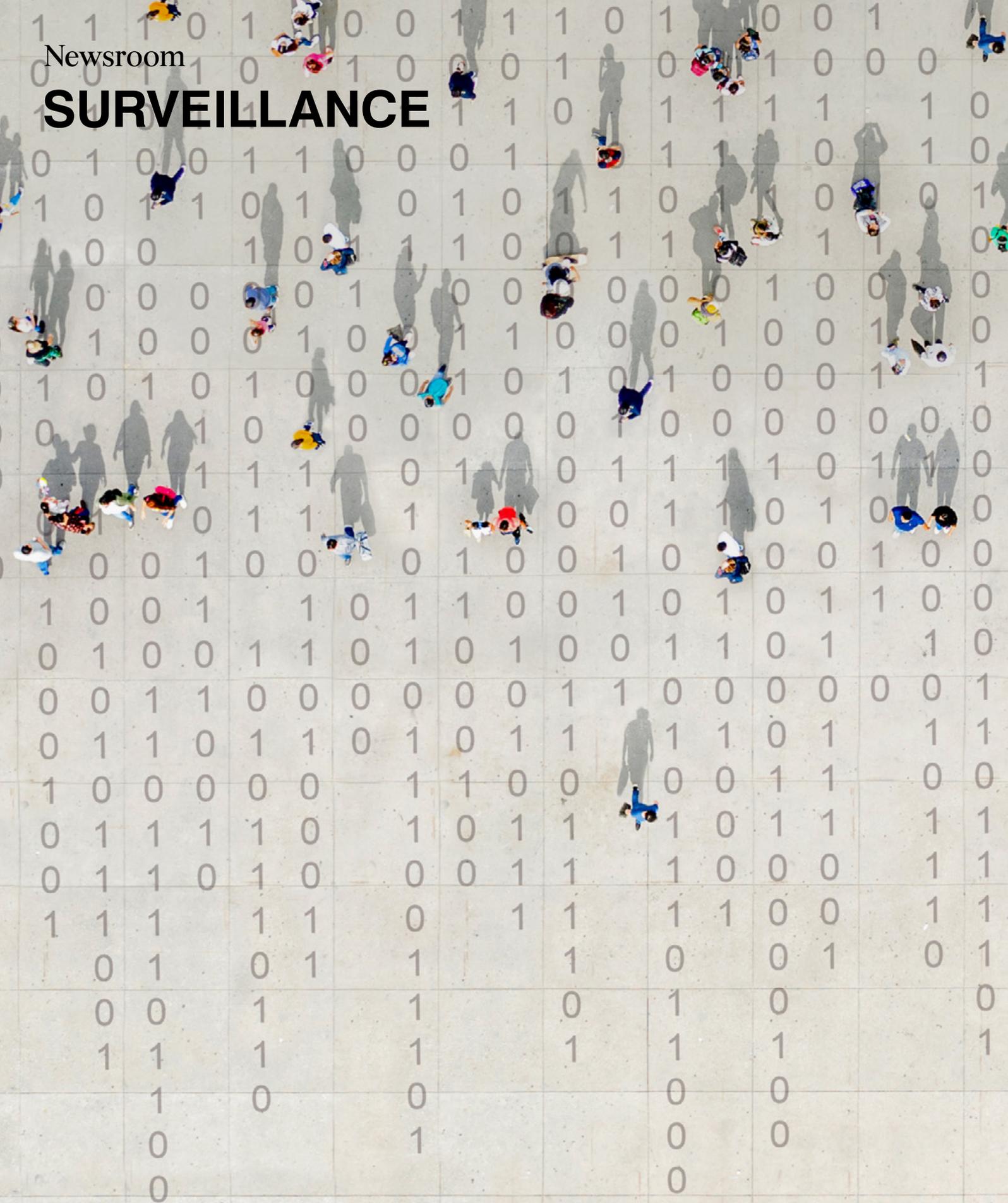
## IMPACT

**These investigations had a direct impact for people on ground in the border zones but also for politicians in decision-makers from Brussels to Berlin. The powerful visual evidence gathered of masked men in action went viral, prompting the EU's Home Affairs Commissioner to acknowledge that Lighthouse's evidence as "convincing". Our director, Klaas van Dijken, was invited by the European Parliament to present that evidence. The same parliament staged a number of hearings on illegal pushbacks which directly referred to our investigations.**

**The Croatian government was forced to admit for the first time that pushbacks were happening at its borders, as well as suspending police officers it claimed were the only ones involved in the clandestine operation. Other countries like Greece and Romania launched their first independent investigations.**

**Asylum seekers at the border between Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina told us that the violence they normally face when crossing the border to seek international protection, reduced and it became easier to claim asylum. Local civil society organisations, activists and documentary makers reached out to us and asked for input and images to further examine the inhumane policies of their own governments and run much-needed awareness campaigns. We saw this same dynamic after our Frontex revelations. Civil Society Organisations started the campaign Abolish Frontex and critical coverage of the agency – once considered an obscure topic – trended on Twitter.**

# SURVEILLANCE



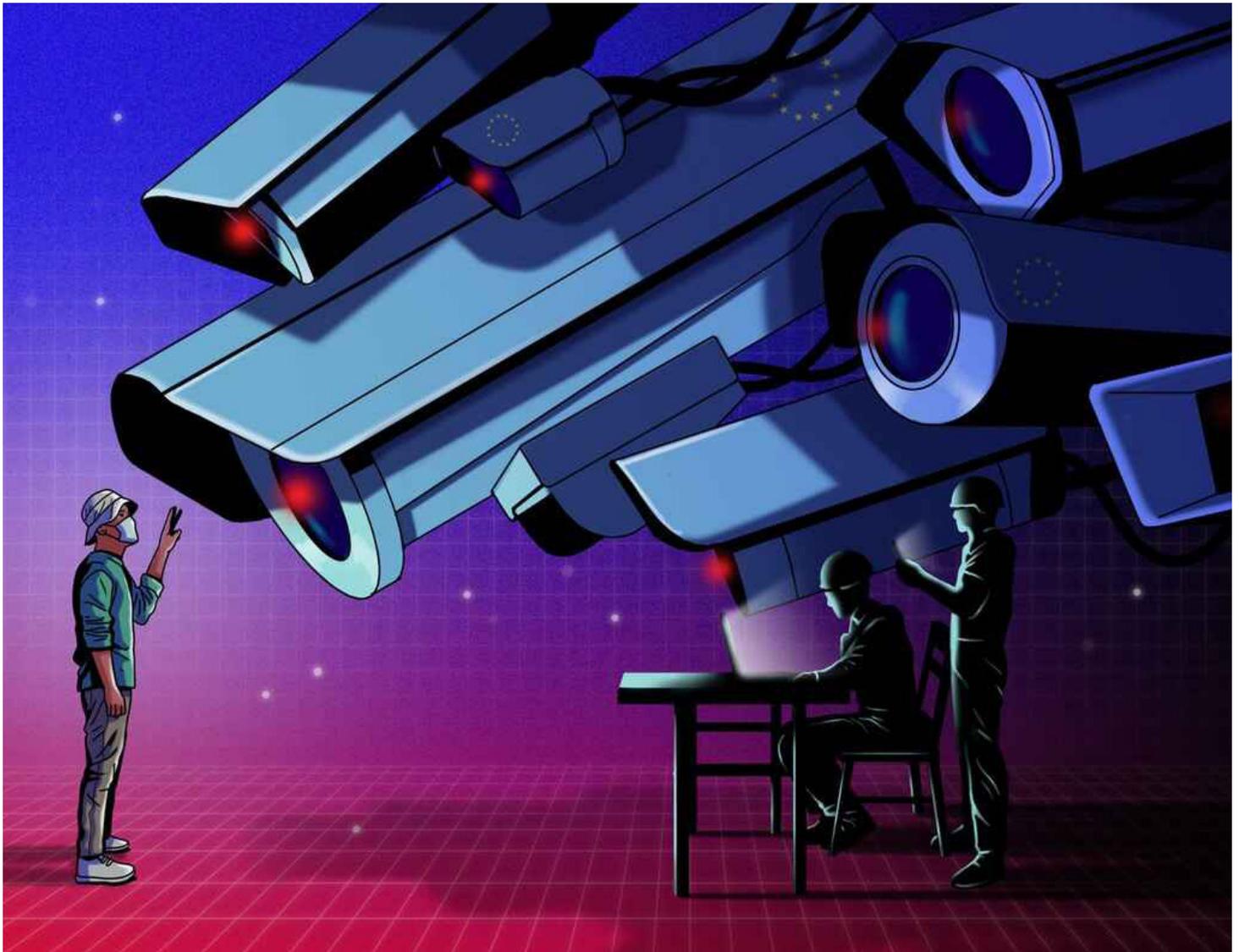
## SURVEILLANCE

This year saw the first serious results from the reporting we have begun in the Surveillance Newsroom. It began with a far-reaching investigation into the European activities of one of the most controversial technology companies in the world, Palantir. Our team showed the extent to which the US-based firm has embedded itself in Europe's police, civil aviation, health and intelligence sectors. Featuring reporting from five countries and working with Der Spiegel and the Guardian it also revealed the nature and extent of problems the company has encountered and how they connect to Europe's ambition to be a leader in digital rights.

The newsroom also published the first in what will be a long term series on welfare surveillance and worked with our Arms Tracking newsroom to catch European tech firms exporting surveillance tools to Myanmar's brutal junta.

## IMPACT

**The newsroom aims to be an essential space for European media to collaborate on investigations which require technical resources and expert reporting not widely available in traditional newsrooms. Our data team has been able to pioneer new approaches to combining freedom of information laws with methodologies for auditing algorithms that are set to establish vital public interest precedents. The year also saw a string of collaborative investigations get underway, the results of which will be apparent in the coming two years. The Palantir work has been widely cited and a number of follow-up investigations have since been launched.**



# FOOD SYSTEMS



## FOOD SYSTEMS

Widely seen as the new frontier in the fight against climate change, the agriculture sector, led by livestock and dairy farms, contributes over a third of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions. Public awareness and political appetite for change is increasing but the status quo is defended by influential lobby groups and there is urgent need for more scrutiny. Food Systems aims to explore this frontier, and illuminate cracks in the system.

The first publications came from an investigation with The Guardian, El Diario and La Marea that shed a light on the dark side of Spain's immense pork sector, documenting the shocking increase in pollution, the animal welfare problems and appalling working conditions. Further rounds of reporting, ahead of an important vote on a new strategy for sustainable farming in the EU, showed how Big Meat stretched the boundaries of lobbying and abuse science, skewed media coverage and pressured MEPs to protect the status quo.

## IMPACT

**The publications about the Spanish pork stoked an already tense debate about pig farming in Spain. It put the local government of Murcia, which has enabled the destructive industrial pork sector, in the spotlight and pushed opposition leaders to demand a ban on new intensive pig farms in vulnerable regions. Our stories on Big Meat and the future of farming in the EU were widely shared among influencers and experts, reached the desks of decision-makers and informed the MEPs who were about to vote for the new EU strategy.**



# WAR WINNERS



## WAR WINNERS

The War Winners newsroom tracks profiteering in countries emerging from conflict. Our pilot focuses on Syria in partnership with Syrian journalists in exile. Using open source data we are building a ground-level picture of the destruction of property rights and the profits reaped from redevelopment projects in the capital and its suburbs, including the foreign investment and secretive financial arrangements facilitating them.

When Denmark became the first European country to order Syrians to go home, we were able to connect this broader picture of property rights to people currently at risk of being returned to Damascus. In partnership with the Migration Newsroom, our investigations into the Danish report used to justify returns revealed that its expert sources rejected its findings, while the NGO that co-authored the report was riven by controversy over their role. We also worked with eight media outlets to document for the first time that hundreds of Syrians have fled Denmark for other European countries.

## IMPACT

**Our reporting on the Danish report justifying returns led to a wave of critical coverage in Danish media and ended up with the experts releasing a joint statement slamming the report as “flawed”.**

**After Lighthouse revealed that Syrians were fleeing Denmark to Europe, MEPs confronted the Danish immigration minister with our findings at a European parliamentary hearing, to demand Denmark uphold European values and agreements.**



# ARMS TRACKING



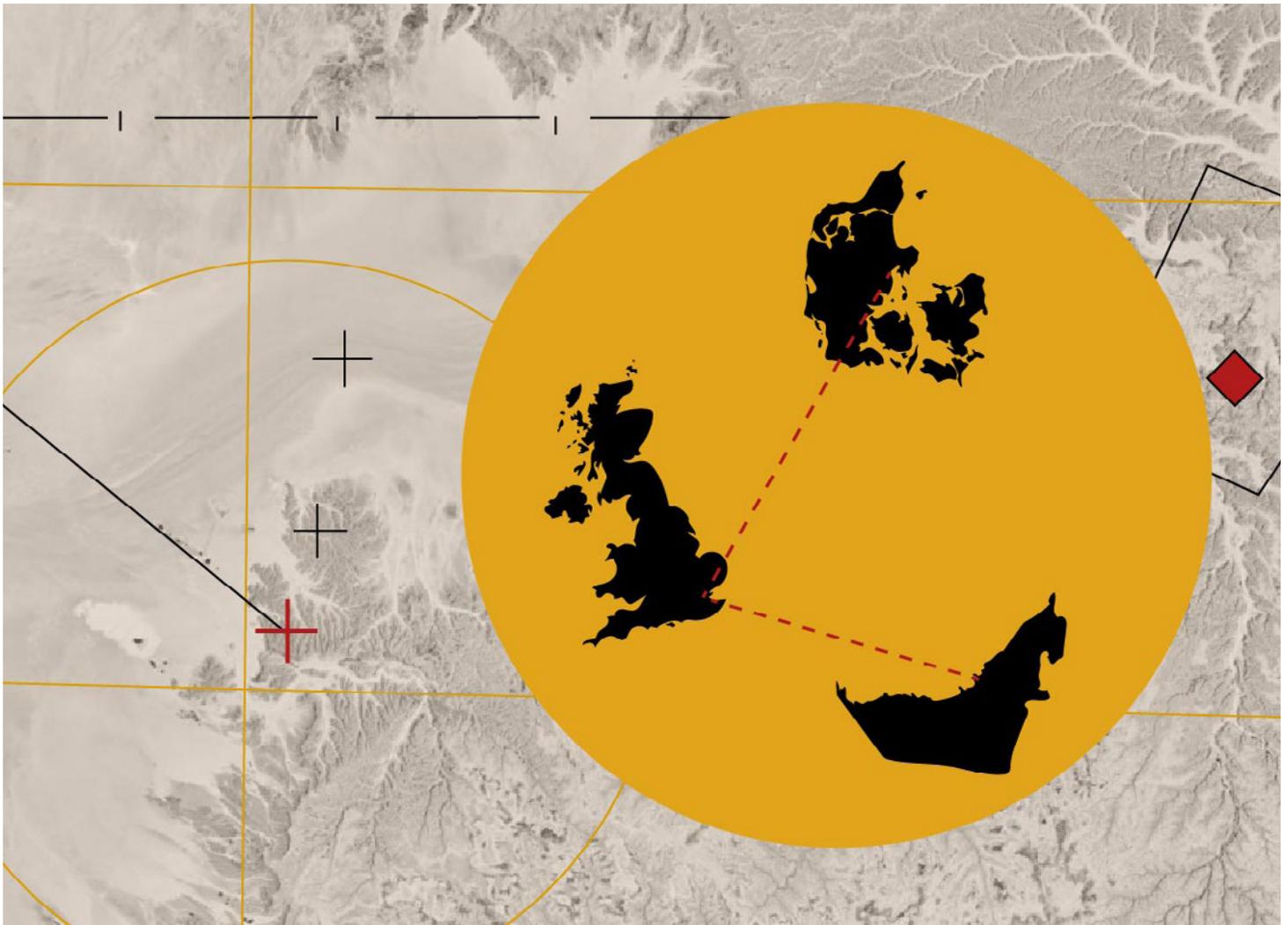
## ARMS TRACKING

The Arms Tracking newsroom defined the early phase of Lighthouse. In 2020 we built on investigations into arms export deals to focus on where much of the real money is obscured in long-term maintenance contracts. This year we followed up with two unique investigations, focussing on less tangible but increasingly important pillars of the arms industry: surveillance technology and command and control software.

One investigation ran in cooperation with our Surveillance Newsroom and documented how EU expertise, products and funding ended up in the hands of the Myanmar junta, an international pariah. It raised serious questions whether the current export control system for surveillance equipment is fit for purpose. A second investigation was able to gather evidence of illegal circumvention of the Danish arms export ban for the United Arab Emirates by Systematic, a producer of military software.

## IMPACT

**As a consequence of our reporting, the Systematic export permit was revoked in December 2021 and the company was reported to the police who are investigating the case and preparing a possible criminal case. The Danish minister of Justice Nick Hækkerup has tightened controls on exports of weapons and military equipment to third countries. The new measures must prevent Danish defence companies to export to controversial third countries. Both the Myanmar coverage and the Danish story went on to win several major awards.**



# MIGRATION



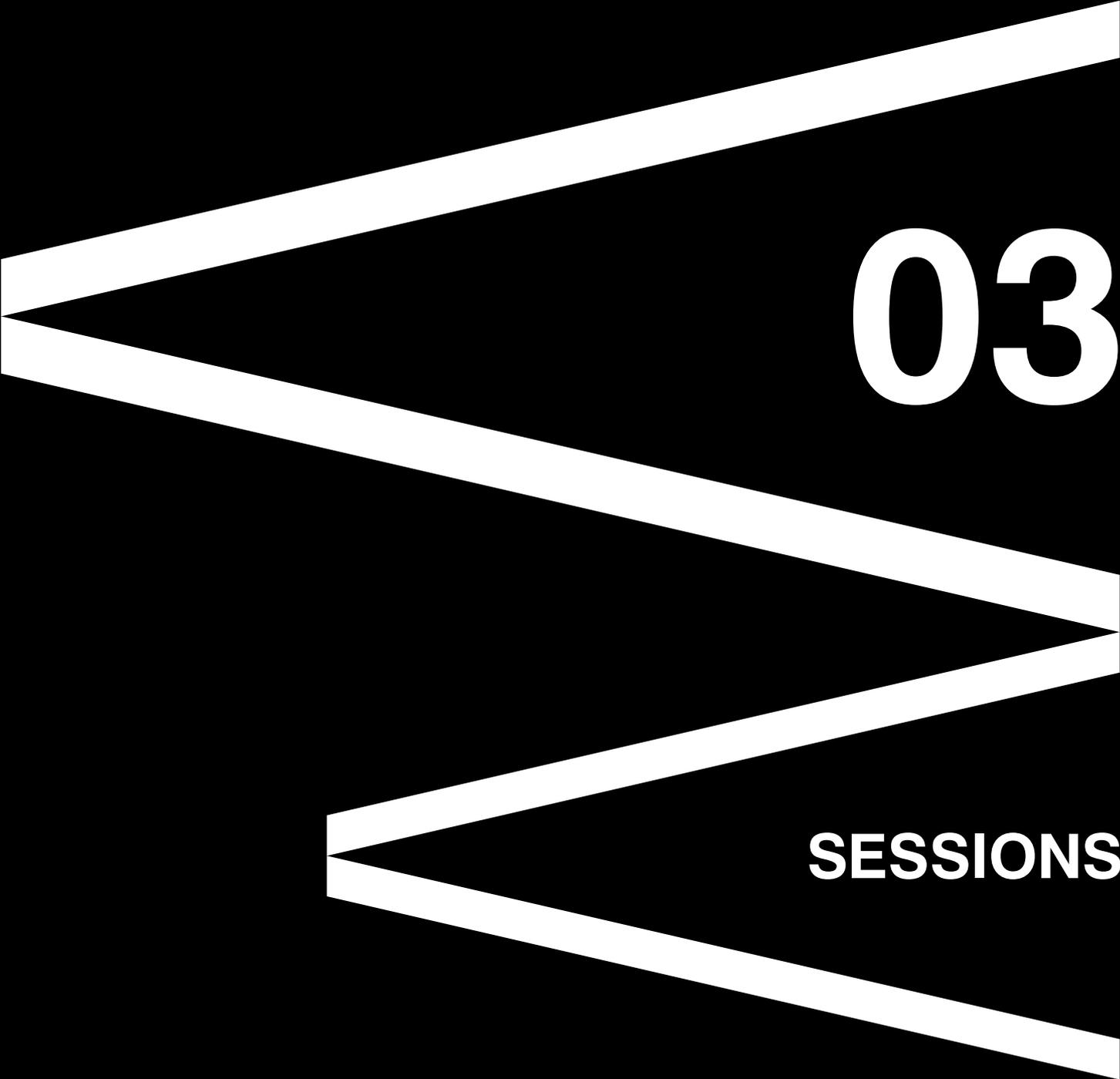
## MIGRATION

The year in was dominated by an ambitious and complex attempt to quantify Europe's vaccine strategy for undocumented populations. We looked at vaccination programmes, strategies, implementation plans, as well as official statements from authorities, for 18 European countries. The main objective was to find out how transparent these countries are about their policies, the inclusivity of those policies and dive deeper into specific targeted vaccination programs for undocumented migrants. What we found is policies that lack transparency, are extremely vague and generally leave out undocumented populations, a linchpin of any kind of public vaccination campaign. The results of our analysis are represented in Scorecards, which provide an overview of how each country fared in terms of Policy Transparency, Access for the Undocumented, Residency and Identification Requirements, Access for Marginalised Populations and Privacy Guarantees. Country-level investigations in several countries probe how public policy plays out in reality for undocumented people seeking the vaccine.

## IMPACT

**All results, together with a detailed methodology explanation, are published on a microsite connected to the Lighthouse Reports, which has attracted media partners interested in deeper dives into the data. The scorecard was then put into context as we worked with media partners in eight EU countries on features that placed the data alongside the experience of undocumented communities.**





**03**

**SESSIONS**

# LIGHTHOUSE SESSIONS

With our annual Lighthouse Sessions we open up our network to early career and ambitious journalists. For this 6-week training course we invite colleagues we admire to share their skills and knowledge. It offers participants a chance to develop investigative skills and gain exposure to collaborative journalism. It allows Lighthouse to scout new talent and potential future contributors.

Apart from being trained, participants directly participate in a Lighthouse Reports international newsroom. This year some of the participants got involved in a month-long investigation into illegal oil dumping in European waters, resulting in publications with 10 outlets across Europe

## SARAH STILLMAN

*is an award winning staff writer at The New Yorker and director of the Global Migration Program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.*

## LISETTE ABERCROMBIE

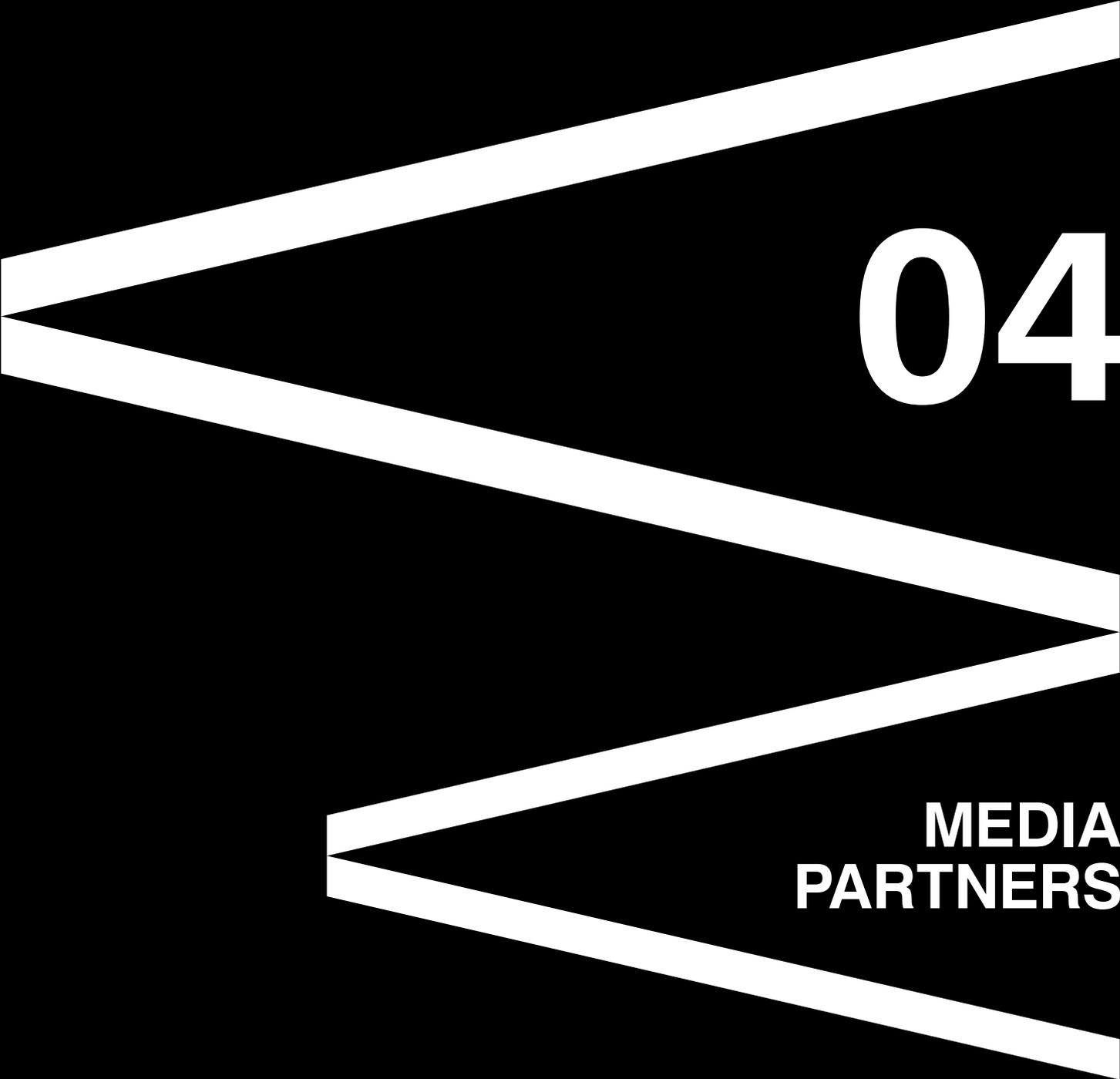
*better known on Twitter as @Technisette — is an experienced trainer in OSINT and author of the highly informative OSINT Curious Project.*

## PAUL HOLDEN

*is director of investigations at Shadow World Investigations, author of five books on corruption and a leading money trails investigator.*

## NANI JANSEN REVENTLOW

*was the founding Director of the Digital Freedom Fund, is a lecturer in Law at Columbia Law School and Adjunct Professor at Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government.*



04

**MEDIA  
PARTNERS**

# MEDIA PARTNERS

## National

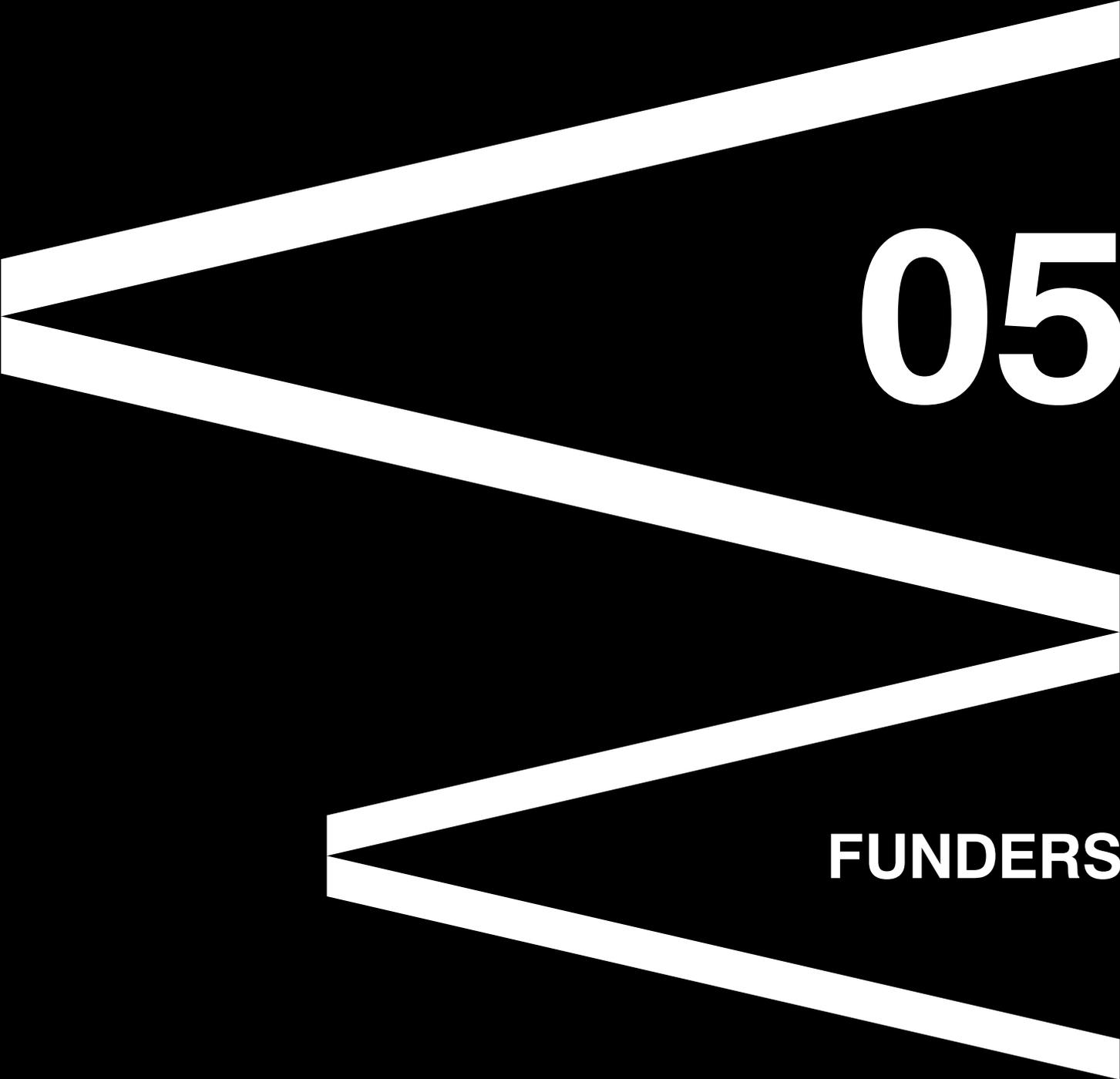


## Pan-European



## International



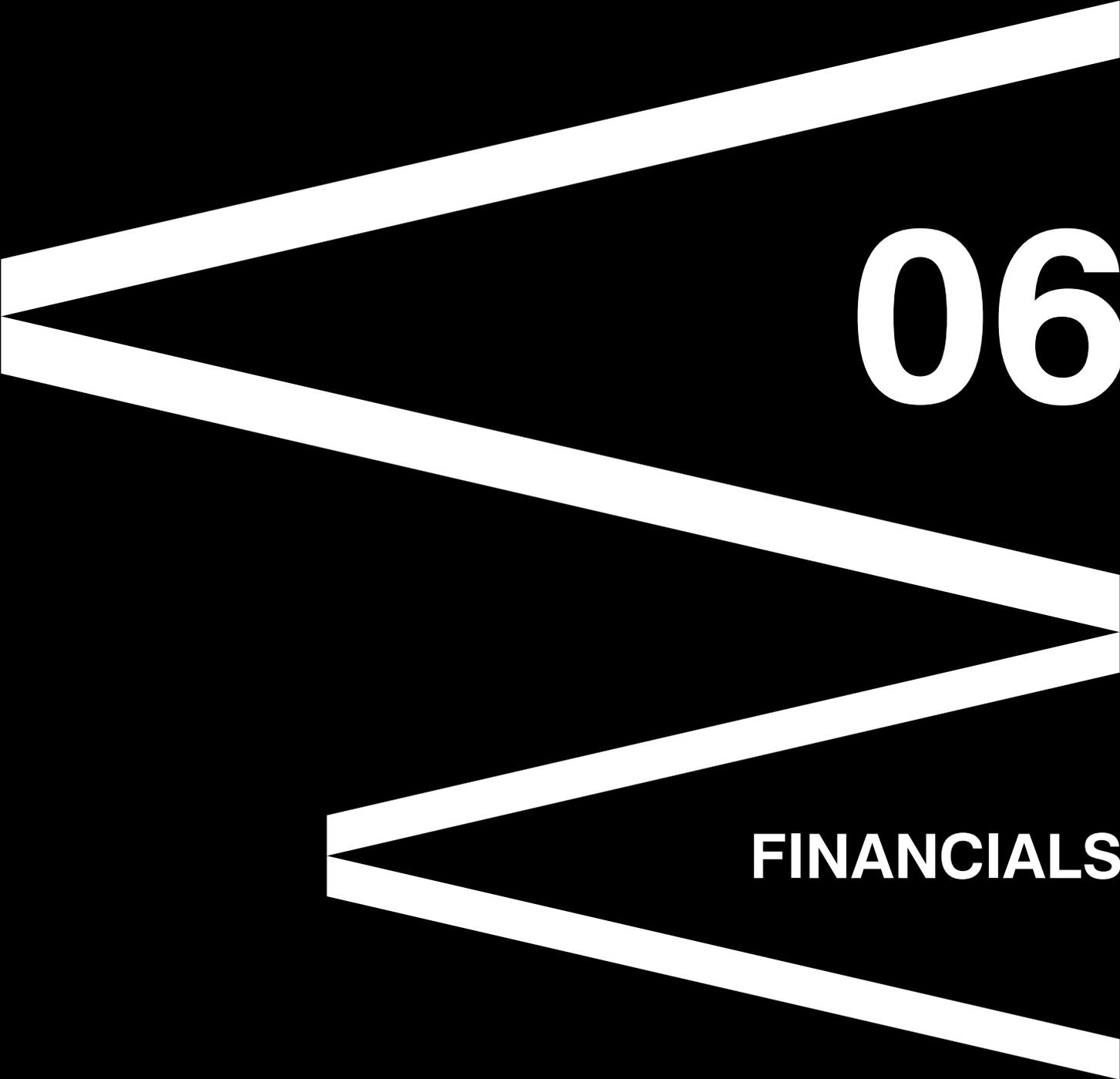


05

FUNDERS

# FUNDERS





06

FINANCIALS

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE	2021 (€)	2020 (€)
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants and contract income	867.129	489.500
Media partners	20.876	25.021
Lighthouse sessions participations fees	2.250	2.925
Other income	400	—
	<b>890.655</b>	<b>517.446</b>
<b>PERSONNEL COSTS</b>		
Wages and salaries	103.500	94.500
Socials security charges	18.883	19.556
Holiday payments	8.280	8.280
Core team compensation	231.912	116.073
	<b>362.575</b>	<b>238.409</b>
<b>PROJECT COSTS</b>		
Consultancy costs	17.710	5.281
Freelancers	224.325	120.142
Software, subscriptions and hosting costs	10.669	1.214
Travel costs	25.552	7.764
Workshop costs	2.516	400
Other costs	5.852	4.808
	<b>286.624</b>	<b>139.609</b>
<b>DEPRECIATION TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Equipment	<b>1.285</b>	<b>1.008</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS</b>		
Accountancy costs	24.122	6.059
Auditor's costs	10.830	—
Bank and interest charges	5.703	949
Brand redesign	—	11.343
HR consultants costs	—	2.665
Software, subscriptions and hosting costs	11.083	3.983
Insurance costs	2.185	2.994
Office and phone costs	17.735	21.517
Travel costs	13.234	2.547
Web development	3.354	—
Other costs	-1.165	4.076
	<b>87.081</b>	<b>56.133</b>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lighthouse Reports is built on the trust and support of our partners, our funders and the network of terrific and committed freelance and staff journalists who have made our newsrooms part of their most ambitious work. We are incredibly grateful for everything you do to promote and sustain our work.

[info@lighthousereports.nl](mailto:info@lighthousereports.nl)  
Twitter @LHReports  
Facebook/lighthousereports

