INTERNATIONAL FACT-CHECKING NETWORK @ Poynter.

Name of the organization: Vox Check

Name of the assessor: Oleg Khomenok

Edits made by the organization following this assessment

Remarks and explanations to the External Assessment Sheet

1. VoxCheck did not publish articles over the period between 01/02 - 19/02 due to illness of its leader and project manager Olena Shkarpova, as well as the other VoxCheck employees. It was a harsh flu that did not allow us to work on a full potential. However, we did make daily monitorings for the Rating of Liars, released videos and fulfilled all our obligations within the projects that VoxCheck makes together with other media. For example, during this period we made a radio program on Hromadske Radio (see here, 14/02) and released fact-checks for the TV-show “Hra sliv” (see programs on 01/02, 07/02 and 15/02). During the next week after the mentioned period we published three articles (please, check here: one, two, three).
2. The Annual Report with the financial statement of VoxUkraine for the year 2016 can be found here. The report for the year 2017 should be prepared within the next few months.
3. The fact-checking methodology, correction policy and claim submission can be found here. We are ready to publish it on our web-site as soon as the IFCN and external assessor will approve it.
4. Regarding the Liars rating, in our opinion the methodology is accurate from the scientific and statistical point of view. Although the number of the statements for some politicians is relatively smaller than for others, in this case it is important that we take

not some sample, but the "general population" of all statements of the specific politicians. So we believe that if we take all public fact-checkable statements, we do not have biases, which could occur if we only rated sample of the statements. The collection method for statements is consistent across time and across politicians, which also eliminates risks for other biases. So the number of statement, although varies a lot from politician to politician does not lead to biases in the evaluation. Of course some politicians may speak less overall, but we do not think it should impact their "lie index".

There can be a risk that some statements can be missed due to the fact that they are collected manually by people - even though we monitor all media appearances of the politicians. In any case, even if we randomly do not take some statements (which is doubtful, but we admit this can be the case), the randomness across population, applied to all politicians, ensures objectivity of the rating. This methodology was developed and approved by the Editorial Board of VoxUkraine as statistically meaningful and sensible.

Methodology
https://voxukraine.org/uk/voxcheck-f-a-q/

Comments from the assessor

Oleg Khomenok: VoxCheck did great job updating the site in accordance to the comments in assessment sheet. I checked the methodology description on the Google Drive and to my mind it is well written and ready for publication on the VoxCheck web-site.

Now with all updates VoxCheck is fully compliant and can join IFCN

Conclusion and recommendations

I think Voxcheck is compliant with most principles but should make some updates on their web-site to be accepted.

There are several issues that should be addressed by Voxcheck to be compliant and accepted. They are listed

in the comments below each section of evaluation together with recommendations. In short there are:

- In Criterion 1 there is a need to provide the explanation of the absense of the stories on the site during Jan 30-Feb 20, 2018.
- In Criterion 4a there is a need to publish publish financial statements for 2016, 2017 and translate them into to Ukrainian and Russian
- In Criterion 5a there is a need to publish the fact-checking methodology on the web-site.
- In Criterion 5b there is a need to create direct link that will enable reader in 2 clicks to submit a statement or link to be fact-checked with explanation of what is fact-checkable and what is not.
- In Criterion 6 there is a need to develop and update correction policy in the rules&regs manual as well publish it on the web-site.

The Lie index
https://voxukraine.org/longreads/lie-theory/index-en.html
https://voxukraine.org/longreads/lie-theory/index-ua.html
in general raises a question of comparative index methodology since comparing 56 statements of Poroshenko with 32 of Vilkul for example and creating a rating chart in percentage looks irrelevant. Some of the politicians were rated on 10 statements, at the same time President of Ukraine was rated on 56 statements.

The Lie index is published under Voxcheck rubric of the

site but to my mind should be separate product not directly associated with the Voxcheck since it has a lot of distortions in the comparison based on unequal initial numbers of statements. Notably that this story has switched off commenting option, I believe it would get a lot of criticizing comments.

For further updates of the site here is a good example of methodology description and correction policy placed on the page https://www.factcheck.org/our-process/

Finally I would recommend acceptance of organisation after updates on the web-site and clear explanation of the pause in publishing in February of 2018 will be provided and separating Lie index from the Voxcheck page.

Checklist for assessors

Please assess the following criteria when evaluating an organization's respect of the code of principles. Please justify the compliance levels selected with a short (500 words max.) report below each criterion.

1) Organization 1

2) Nonpartisanship and fairness 2

3) Transparency of sources 3

4) Transparency of funding and of organization 4

5) Transparency of methodology 5

6) Open and honest corrections policy 6

1) Organization

The code of principles is for organizations that regularly publish nonpartisan reports on the accuracy of statements by public figures, major institutions, and other widely circulated claims of interest to society.

COMPLIANCE	**None**	**Partial**	**Complete**
The signatory is a legally registered organization set up exclusively for the purpose of fact-checking or the distinct fact-checking section of a legally registered media outlet or research institution.			X
The signatory publishes reports that evaluate distinct claims exclusively on the basis of their accuracy. It does so on a regular basis (an average of at least one report a week over the previous three months).		X	

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** (a) evidence of legal registration or organizational status; (b) links to website or location of fact checks published in the previous three months.

VoxUkraine is registered as non-profit non-government organisation under Reg.No at 40116636 the Unified Register of Legal Entities of Ukraine. The Voxcheck founders check with the OSINT tools showed no direct connections to any political party or politician via companies or NGOs. It has distinct fact-checking section on the web-site of the organisation.

Voxcheck regularly provided analysis and published reports in Ukrainian until the end of January 2018 but there is no reports for February 2018 at all with no explanation of the gap to the readers.

2) Nonpartisanship and fairness

Principle 1 *"We fact-check claims using the same standard for every fact check. We do not concentrate our fact-checking on any one side. We follow the same process for every fact check and let the evidence dictate our conclusions. We do not advocate or take policy positions on the issues we fact-check."*

COMPLIANCE	**None**	**Partial**	**Complete**
The signatory demonstrates that fact checks cover a variety of subjects or speakers and do not unduly concentrate on one side of the topic/context they fact-check			X
The signatory must not support a candidate in any election nor advocate or take policy positions on any issues not strictly related to fact-checking. The signatory should also explain its policies on preventing staff from direct involvement in political parties and advocacy organizations.			X

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** (a) links to ten fact checks proving scope and consistency of fact-checking accompanied by a short explanation of how the organization strives to maintain standards. The assessors reserve the right to select examples beyond the ten fact checks. (b) policy regarding advocacy/political positions from the organization and its staff.

In general Voxcheck looks pretty good and provides extended and deep analysis of the politicians statements tracking representatives of various political forces and public events where some statements had been made.

Voxcheck defines statements on *True, False, Manipulative and Exaggeration/Underestimation*. *True* means either correct facts or data put in the relevant context. *False* means wrong or incomplete facts or data. *Manipulative* means correct facts used in irrelevant context that create

distorted understanding of situation.
Exaggeration/Underestimation means using correct facts and data but the influence on the understanding of situation is either exaggerated or underestimated.

The number of negative definitions is higher than positive (3 against 1).

3) Transparency of sources

Principle 2 *"We want our readers to be able to verify our findings themselves. We provide all sources in enough detail that readers can replicate our work, except in cases where a source's personal security could be compromised. In such cases, we provide as much detail as possible."*

COMPLIANCE	**None**	**Partial**	**Complete**
The signatory links to the sources of the claim it is fact-checking and the evidence it uses to fact-check it (or identifies them in detail where these can't be linked).			X

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** A brief explanation (500 words max) of how sources are provided in enough detail that readers could replicate the fact check. If the signatory has a policy on sources, it should be shared here.

Every single fact-check report has links to relevant sources so anybody can track and look for the extra data and understand which source was used to verify the statement.

4) Transparency of funding and of organization

Principle 3 *"We are transparent about our funding sources. If we accept funding from other organizations, we ensure that funders have no influence over the conclusions we reach in our reports. We detail the professional background of all key figures in our organization and explain our organizational structure and legal status. We clearly indicate a way for readers to communicate with us."*

COMPLIANCE	None	Partial	Complete
All signatories that are standalone organizations must have a page on their site detailing each source of funding over the past calendar year accounting for 5% or more of total revenue. This page should also set out an overview of spending that year and indicate the form in which the organization is registered (e.g. as a non-profit, as a company etc) and, if this would allow the public to verify certain financial information about it. **NB** Where an organization is the fact-checking section a media house, the signatory should make a statement on ownership, more detail may be required if this has not been disclosed publicly.		X	
All authors and key actors behind the fact-checking project must be clearly listed on the site and their biographies indicated.			X
Signatories must indicate an easy way for the public to reach out directly to the fact-checking initiative with complaints or comments.			X

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** (a) a link to the page detailing funding sources or statement of ownership (b) a link to the section detailing all active authors and key actors behind the project with their biographies (c) a link to the section where readers can contact the organization

Criterion 4a: The latest financial report on the site is for 2015, and only in English that is reducing the audience only by English speakers.
Recommendation: publish financial statements for 2016, 2017 on the https://voxukraine.org/uk/about-us/; translate to Ukrainian and Russian https://voxukraine.org/uk/finansical-reports/

There are several ways readers can get in touch with the

author or newsroom: comments under the story, links and buttons to the social networks' accounts, "contact us" page.

5) Transparency of methodology

Principle 4 *"We explain the methodology we use to select, research, write, edit, publish and correct our fact checks. We encourage readers to send us claims to fact-check and are transparent on why and how we fact-check."*

COMPLIANCE	**None**	**Partial**	**Complete**
The signatory explains its fact-checking methodology publicly and clearly in an accessible place.		X	
The signatory indicates to readers how they can send claims to fact-check while making it clear what readers can legitimately expect will be fact-checked and what isn't fact-checkable.		X	

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** (a) a link to the page with a methodology that should include how the signatory selects claims to fact-check and sources to provide evidence for its conclusions (b) link to the page where readers can submit claims to fact-check.

Criterion 5a: the methodology is not published on the Voxcheck website as a step-by-step instruction on separate page with direct link. Brief explanation was once done for the Lie-index, but with no details.
Recommendation: publish the methodology on the web-site.
Criterion 5b: despite the applicant states that claim can be sent "via our Facebook page, personal messages or comments", it is unclear how readers can do it and there is no page indicating this.
Recommendation: create a button or item in the site index

that will enable reader in 2 clicks to submit a statement or link to be fact-checked with explanation of what is fact-checkable and what is not.

6) Open and honest corrections policy

Principle 5 *"We publish our corrections policy and follow it scrupulously. We correct clearly and transparently in line with our corrections policy, seeking so far as possible to ensure that readers see the corrected version."*

COMPLIANCE	**None**	**Partial**	**Complete**
The signatory has a public corrections policy and can point to instances where it has implemented it in the past year if it has made an error.		X	

→ **Evidence required from signatory:** a link to the page with the corrections policy and one or two examples of a correction made, or correction requests handled, in the past year.

Criterion 6: there is no step-by-step explanation of correction policy on the Voxcheck site as well as in the rules&regs.
Recommendation: develop and update this policy in the rules&regs manual as well publish it on the web-site.