

Abstract Submission to Annual Political Studies Association Media and Politics Group,  
University of Nottingham, November 8-9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Title: Defining Freedom of the Press: A Cross National Examination of Press Ethics and Regulation in Ten European Countries**

Authors: Dr John Steel (University of Sheffield), Dr Charlotte Elliott-Harvey (University of Sheffield), Professor Martin Conboy (University of Sheffield), Dr Julie Firmstone (University of Leeds), Dr Carl Fox (University of Leeds), Dr Jane Mulderrig (University of Sheffield), Dr Joe Saunders (University of Durham), and Dr Paul Wragg (University of Leeds)

**Abstract**

This presentation outlines a major new AHRC funded study on press ethics and regulation in Europe and the UK. Arguably previous inquiries into the ethics of the UK press have hitherto been far too parochial, as they have missed opportunities to learn from parallel developments and concerns overseas. This project, in contrast, will develop knowledge and understanding of how press regulators in comparable jurisdictions from around Europe approach the difficult questions in media ethics of balancing freedom and responsibility. Significantly, it will also examine 'news work' itself and explore the extent to which ethical codes impact on the daily working practices of journalists, news workers and importantly, those directly affected by the activities of the press. The isolationism that has characterised the debates about press ethics in the UK has hitherto hindered the possibility of benchmarking and learning from other societies in which problems of ethics and regulation have been addressed by legislators, journalists and the general public. In contrast, this project will directly help press regulators and ethics bodies review and update future iterations of their codes and related guidance and will help establish norms of journalism ethics in these areas. Moreover, by examining how press regulators and councils in these countries intersect with the law, we will gain a much richer understanding of how press regulation operates in practice. This would then offer the possibility of learning from best practice and more clearly examining and defining the theory *and* practice of media freedom. This project has far-reaching social impact given the technological and societal changes that the news landscape faces not only in producing viable and sustainable codes of conduct but also helping to strengthen this new sector of the news media and protect groups that have hitherto been subject to press abuses.