

# Michael Leidig

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**Michael Leidig** (born 19 April 1965) is a British journalist based in **Vienna**, Austria. He has worked for Austrian and international media in print and broadcast. He was also the owner of **CEN**, the news wire agency **Central European News Ltd**,<sup>[1]</sup> which operated from 1995 to 2024.<sup>[2]</sup> He is the co-founder of the independent freelance journalism initiative the *Fourth Estate Alliance* (T4).<sup>[3]</sup>

Central European News has been referred to by **BuzzFeed** as "The King of Bullsh\*t News" due to a number of stories that CEN had been selling that BuzzFeed claimed were false.<sup>[4][5]</sup> One such story BuzzFeed reported that CEN was selling was that 17 year old **Noa Pothoven** was killed by **euthanasia**, rather than the truth, which was that she had refused to be **tube fed**.<sup>[5]</sup> CEN sued BuzzFeed over the story, alleging that it was attempting to damage CEN after it opened offices in London; the suit was dismissed.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Career [ edit ]

Leidig moved to Austria in 1993 to take up a role as a news presenter with the **ORF** and in 1995 left to start his first agency, CEN. In 1996, he became editor of the monthly English language *Vienna Reporter* and in 1995 became editor of a daily Austrian English language newspaper *Austria Today*. He also produced English language news with a daily English section for *Die Presse* for several years, later taking over the layout, editorial and writing of a page a day in the *Wiener Zeitung*, the world's oldest still selling newspaper. CEN later launched other online news wire projects such as the *Austrian Times* that included an English food guide with Austrian chef Bernie Rieder.<sup>[6]</sup>

Leidig co-wrote the book "*The Girl in the Cellar - The Natascha Kampusch Story*" published by Hodder & Stoughton in 2006.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 2008, Leidig met Austrian charity worker Hannes Urban and they were involved in establishing the Austrian charity project *Journalism Without Borders*.<sup>[8]</sup>

In April 2024, Leidig shuttered Central European News along with his other news agencies: Newsflash, AsiaWire and Clipzilla. At that time the network employed 30 people and had offices in Austria and Macedonia with staff also working in Iran, Egypt, China and Turkey. Leidig said he needed to make £47,000 each month to cover costs and had only been bringing in £25,000.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Libel cases [ edit ]

In 2011 a PR agent for the Kampusch family alleged that Leidig had falsified interviews for his book. The case attracted widespread media attention in Austria and internationally.<sup>[9]</sup> Leidig won a full apology after an Austrian court ruled that the case brought against him had been "a deliberate attempt to damage sales of the book."<sup>[10]</sup>

In April 2015 Leidig was again accused of producing fake news in two reports by online news portal **BuzzFeed**. In January 2016, he sued them in a federal court in New York for libel.<sup>[11]</sup> The case alleges that two articles by BuzzFeed<sup>[4][12]</sup> were a deliberate attempt at undermining the news agency which was a major supplier to BuzzFeed's UK rivals.<sup>[13]</sup>CEN published a 126-page book in an attempt to address the criticism and raised questions about BuzzFeed's motivation for attacking CEN.<sup>[14]</sup> In March 2019, the case was dismissed, on the grounds that "Buzzfeed argues that plaintiffs (Leidig) cannot show the falsity of the allegedly defamatory statements, and thus plaintiffs' claims must fail. The court agrees."<sup>[13]</sup>

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