

DIVERSITY REPORTING HANDBOOK



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Diversity Reporting Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

The media plays a crucial role and is responsible for promoting good relations between people and building a democratic society. Its task is to represent objectively and truthfully the different communities in society and to encourage respect for the diversities whether they are related to ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or other differences between individuals.

How can the media better reflect the diversity in its program and the editor's offices? How should the different groups be represented in society? These are some of the issues covered in the Diversity Reporting Handbook issued by the School of Journalism and Public Relations.

This Handbook is primarily for journalists, students, educators and activists, as well as the media managers. Its intention is not to offer a comprehensive review of professional and ethical standards on reporting diversities, but to prepare a general framework of rules that are accepted in professional journalism's practice. Hence, the recommendations are actually a part of professional standards in journalism and ethical codes that apply worldwide.

The presence of diversities in the editor's offices and in journalistic contents attracts new audiences to the medium. It encourages the process of finding creative, original and alternative ways of reporting on diversities in a society such as Macedonia.

The Handbook consists of several parts that offer recommendations for reporting on: ethnic and religious differences, gender issues, sexual minorities, persons with special needs, elderly, refugees and displaced persons, and different races. It provides basic recommendations for the media to promote diversity in society, but also for the establishment and maintenance of the concept of diversity in the editor's offices. Briefly it presents the concept of peace journalism, whose primary goal is to encourage resolution of different kinds of conflicts.

The Handbook also lists useful sources of information and additional literature. We hope that this Handbook will find a place in the editor's offices as a useful reminder to journalists reporting on our everyday life.

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WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity is a condition or circumstances when someone is different or when there are differences. This notion leads to heterogeneity, and when linked with mankind, the word “diversity” refers to differences in gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, ideological attitudes, political affinity, place of residence, marital status, work experience, but is not only limited to the above.

«Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence¹, is stated in Article 3 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.



PROGRESS THROUGH DIVERSITY

By maintaining and fostering diversity we encourage respect for diversities based on race, sex, origin, sexual orientation and other factors that distinguish individuals from one another. Instead of being anxious or prejudiced due to the existence of differences, people are encouraged to accept that there are different interests, values and physical and emotional characteristics of the community in which they function.

Maintenance and respect for diversity lead to reduction of discrimination and promotion of equal opportunities.

1. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversities, available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf>

What characterizes the process of maintaining and fostering diversity in society?

- ① Through it the reality is accepted that people differ in many ways.**
- ② It establishes the consequences arising from the diversities.**
- ③ It proposes or imposes approaches that comprise these issues in the interest of the environment or society in general.**

The diversity represents value that deserves particular attention, especially through the media. It must be understood and cultivated as a condition for the existence of a quality journalism. To achieve mutual understanding, correct, accurate, clear and comprehensive reporting is essential. If a democratic society is expected to promote good relations between people, the media has the main role and responsibility in the representation of different communities in an objective and honest manner.

Diversities in the media bring more than increased sensitivity to the existence of differences. Through them the quality of journalism rises, which, *inter alia*, can be achieved through hiring new staff, more employees, or individuals belonging to different minority groups. Any medium can not fully connect with the society if it does not represent the diversities that exist in it.



BASIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY IN SOCIETY:

- Become aware of the impact on individuals and on different communities over journalists' reporting and the way it is done.
- Establish and maintain regular contact with members of different groups and communities.
- Look at your role as something that should provide an understanding among all. This, among other things, would be achieved through removal of barriers that exist in everyday communication or in the absence of such communication. Your role is more than just providing a chronicle of events.
- Reporting on diversities is not limited to events in a society. With globalization and the increasing interaction between citizens of different countries around the world, the importance of reporting on diversities is becoming even greater. The events that happen in one country can have serious and direct impact on other countries or nations. Thus, the problem in one country can become a problem in the region or beyond.
- When asked to report on a topic that is related to diversity, it is necessary to carefully consider the angles from which it will be covered. Considering that you will be reporting on the topic related to diversity, it is necessary to reconsider the previous practice and method of reporting, and consider all possibilities.
- Most journalists have their own explanations for the facts they are reporting, and they can easily become «part of the story.» Given that it can not be avoided, it is especially important not to point out at the diversities as something bad.
- Try to understand the views of others.

- Constantly check the facts, and especially be careful when dealing with unreliable sources of information or events that may cause the crisis.
- It is also necessary to try to predict the consequences of your reporting and the public reaction. In order to do this, you need to know well the context in which things happen, to have enough information about the history of a problem, but also for the possible development of the situation.
- Avoid group generalizations as much as possible. When reporting on individuals or their actions, whether positive or negative, look at it as an individual question, not as something that concerns or affects the whole group he/she belongs to.
- Professional journalism implies continuous effort of journalists to improve their skills for «mediation» between people and reality in which they live.

Reminder on the questions the journalists should ask when reporting on diversities:

- Am I reporting on all aspects of various communities, including both positive and negative?
- Am I aware of the power of perceptions that I create with my reporting and whether I am avoiding further imposing of stereotypes? Am I looking for and discovering different perspectives when doing interviews, regardless of the story?
- Are the «labels» that I am using to describe people appropriate and necessary, and whether I respect the principles of my editor's office and ethical standards of the profession?

- Do I regularly check a wide range of sources of information?
- Do I discuss about diversities and whether I ask colleagues and editors to explain decisions they make related to the news?
- Do I explore the various groups to avoid fostering stereotypes?
- Am I aware of hidden agendas and divisions in the groups, in order not fall under the influence or manipulation of some sources of power?
- Do I consult with colleagues and editors when in doubt about the tone of the story?



Reminder for the editor:

- Do I give journalists enough time to make contacts with various sources of information? Does it provide for a wider range of journalistic stories?
- Do I create an atmosphere in the editor's office which encourages journalists to go a step beyond traditional information gathering?
- Do I personally explore all sources of information and show openness towards non-traditional views and attitudes? Am I open to views other than mine?
- Does the content of our stories and ideas for photo stories promote cultural and other stereotypes? Do, in my estimation, photos and visual content correctly represent the entire group?
- Do I look into the issue regarding the use of language to check whether there are elements of bias?

- Am I aware of the sensitivity of minorities before I set and consider a given style which describes groups or communities?
- Do we neglect or overexpose a story because it contains elements of diversity?
- Do I regularly examine the cumulative impact of our reporting?

Reminder for the media management team

- Do we employ the most competent people? And are we sufficiently clear about what those qualifications are?
- Do we tend to hire individuals who may present different perspectives?
- After their recruitment, do we support and train the new recruits?
- Do we refer to the educational institutions for what we need?
- Do we have long term plans for the employees in the editor's office (for example, participation in programs for media literacy, etc.).



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY IN EDITOR'S OFFICE

1 Regarding the production of contents in the media:

- Through existing and new contents in programs, the diversities in society should be represented in all their forms, and fundamental rights should be demonstrated in this field. The media can greatly promote a more realistic picture of the groups that face discrimination and the problems they have in a while.
- All forms of media content should be included in the representation of diversity. Good examples are found in all types of media in all journalistic genres.
- To create a database of examples of groups that face discrimination in society. This database can help you find people from groups that face discrimination and to serve as a reliable and consistent sources of information, opinions and expertise. The media which is committed to professional representation of diversity in society should be in regular communication and rely on the voice of the people or organizations that recognize the problems arising from the imposition of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.
- To meet the growing need for higher standards in journalism and to produce various programs that will enhance integration into society.
- To support and develop new forms and to use new media to influence the young generation of recipients of media content. Such forms and content should include and reach out to all groups in society.
- To establish and maintain internal and external structures that will include the management team of the media, reporters, editors and representatives of professional bodies (organizations, associations, networks, etc..), which will examine the quality of reporting on diversities. These structures will have the responsibility

to strengthen good practices and contribute to improving the daily operations of the editor's offices. Cooperation with civil society could help the independent monitoring of reporting on diversities, but also contribute to increased intercultural communications.

In terms of employment policy or engaging staff in the media:

- It is necessary to check these policies to determine what are the procedures regarding non-discrimination.
- It is necessary to engage individuals at all levels, from the minority communities, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, including those who are victims of discrimination.
- The internal procedures should be provided and opportunities for advancement of this team in the organization. The vulnerable groups should be provided with adequate access to the media facility.
- There should also be discussions about when and where it is necessary to take positive steps regarding the establishment of quotas.
- Priority in the operation of the media is to attend training on reporting on diversities and to overcome stereotypical reporting on groups that face discrimination. Everyone employed in the media field would benefit from this.
- Using literature with guidelines, terminology and recommendations regarding the reporting on diversity.
- Networking among the media to exchange positive experiences.



Regarding the general approach to the work:

- The ethical codes should be applied in daily operations, in order to avoid all forms of discrimination in the reporting, and reporting that relies on stereotypes and prejudices. These codes should include recommendations on detecting hate speech.
- To take into account the need for adequate reporting on diversities in internal 'audit' of the work of the media.
- To participate in international projects for diversity in the media. It will provide a better transfer of knowledge and experience on these issues.
- Actively looking for opportunities to participate in initiatives associated with the reporting on diversities.

What are stereotypes?

Stereotypes are “perceptions or beliefs that we have for groups or individuals based on our previously formed opinions or views” (Samovar & Porter, 2008:208)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REPORTING ON ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Recommendations and standards that will be presented in this handbook give review of the approaches that have proved functional in performing journalistic activities throughout Europe.

Consider the approach in reporting on ethnic groups.

- ◎ This recommendation implies avoiding sensationalist headlines and articles, which may overemphasize the effect of a problem or phenomenon in society. Sensationalist headlines and articles can lead to distorted, even wrong picture of what's happening.
- ◎ The activities of individuals should not be connect to the entire ethnic group. You must avoid representing ethnic groups as people who are «out of society.»
- ◎ Ethnicity should be mentioned only in cases when you consider that it is necessary to understand the essence of some questions.
- ◎ When we mention ethnicity, it would be effective to provide appropriate context, or more information.

Use appropriate vocabulary for ethnic communities

- Pay attention to the selection of words and phrases. Particular care should be taken not to use stereotyped images that wrongly associate the ethnic group with an event.
- You must avoid language structures that offend other nationalities and peoples. However, if a journalist believes that he/she must state the words of people who express themselves pejoratively, they should be used as quotations or paraphrases.
- During reporting, you must avoid using expressive words that “demonize” a party to the conflict.

Present with poise

- During the process of reporting, consult as many sources as possible and present all involved parties.
- Do not make journalistic story with an interlocutor who does not have broad perspectives. If the source of information criticizes an entire ethnic group, the representatives of that group should be given an opportunity to respond. Otherwise, you could be considered as a driver of the propaganda machine of the one side.
- Apart from consulting multiple sources, you should check the accuracy of statements, and any interests behind a given statement.
- You should strive to find as many facts as possible on «hidden agendas» of the sources of information. Try to detect possible attempts to manipulate public opinion.

Provide open channels of communication

- In trying to present a balanced story, it would be useful to consult with representatives from the wider environment. It will help you determine the best approach in the treatment of the story.
- It will be particularly useful to use representatives of ethnic groups that you do not belong to as sources of information. Understanding their attitudes, desires and interests will allow you to gain a clearer picture of events, the problems or topics for reporting.
- You need to talk to people from all sides involved in the story. It means that you should consult everyone that can give you information, not just those who present themselves as leaders. Ordinary people often have a different view of the problem than those who present themselves as representatives and interpreters of the reality.
- If a member of an ethnic group refuses to talk to you, it should not be seen as a hostile gesture. You should not assume that the person has information he/she wants to conceal.
- People are afraid to communicate their thoughts, fearing the consequences. Your task is to try to discover the most effective approach to win the interlocutors over from different groups. Moreover, it is necessary to take into consideration not to hurt their rights and feelings.
- When reporting on a conflict or collision, it is necessary to identify and cover all elements, and those associated and those that separate the different sides. Make a clear overview of all the items that will help you and the audience. Thereby, you will succeed to connect things and to understand the views of all affected parties.
- Through their actions and questions you may realize that the differences between groups are not as big as someone is presenting or seeing. That way you introduce yourself as someone who does not see the story subjectively.

- Do not associate ethnic communities with appalling events and trends in society.
- Make a distinction between acts of individuals and the general picture for the groups to which they belong.
- Avoid connecting to certain data or images with criminal acts. When reporting about the suspects or convicted criminals, you should avoid unnecessary introduction of ethnicity in the story, and in particular the use of labels.

Turn off your own prejudices

- To inform objectively, at first you should analyze your own attitudes and perceive whether they contain any bias.
- The important thing is not to represent those views in your reporting, either directly or indirectly. You need to understand people and their fears, feelings, attitudes, etc.. The role of media in creating and maintaining an impartial picture of the people is of great importance.

What are stereotypes?

Stereotypes are generalizations that are not credible. From the standpoint of the media, creating a picture of a group can be described as stereotypical transformation of individual characteristics as something general, using media messages, or via text, sound, photography, film, etc.. (Yanovski, 2002).

Provide context

- To offer true and complete picture about some events or conditions, you should provide additional information.
- The events should be seen as a string, not just to focus on the latest happenings.
- It often happens when reporting on incidents, disturbed inter-ethnic relations, or the absence of dialogue, those events to be treated as an isolated process. You need to provide all the information, for former and current events, which will allow the audience to get the true picture.
- You should assess which are the key information that will provide the correct picture of things. If it comes to ethnic conflict, it is necessary to devote attention not only to its scope, but to present the effects over ordinary citizens.

To achieve this, you would find following questions very helpful:

- *What is the daily life of citizens?*
- *What kind of problems they are facing on the economic, social, psychological plan etc..?*
- *Is there a way to help overcoming some of the consequences of the conflict? What would they be?*
- *What are the things people worry about for their future?*



Constantly check the information.

- It is necessary to remember that the information should be checked in every stage of your working. In situation of conflict between different ethnic groups, the sensitivity of all concerned parties is high and the public is always 'hungry' for information. Trying to satisfy this hunger for current information, we can make a mistake in our reporting and present incompletely checked data, and even speculations. It can cause considerable damage to the public, on its perception and understanding of the problems in the society. The audience should be allowed to find out as much as possible about the source of the information and the motivation behind it, in order to be able to get the true picture.

What are stereotypes?

The presence of stereotypes in the media itself is not negative. It is important to understand the ways in which stereotypes in these representations are defined and controlled, or what values and ideas are presented with them, what is the content, which is the function and significance of stereotypes.



Don't take sides

- If you merely report information from the one side, you will not be able to offer a clear picture of ethnic tensions, conflicts or communication. «We can not understand what we do not see. And we can not explain the conflict if we hear only one side².
- In your reporting, you should not be biased towards the expectations or demands of either side of the story. If you are biased, it will easily be seen and will adversely affect inter-ethnic relations, stability in society, and the reputation of the medium.

2. Ignatius, D. When Journalists Take a Side, Wiener Zeitung.at, available at: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=5272&Alias=wzo&cob=494275>



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON RELIGIOUS DIVERSITIES

In the media reporting, religion may be represented in various ways. Thus, for example, one can report on one religion, on several religions or communication between them, then reporting on institutional religion or, about religion outside the institutional frameworks.

Reporting on religions requires extensive knowledge of religious traditions and great caution in expression. Journalistic profession implies continuous operation with facts, and the journalists reporting on religious themes are becoming skilled in reporting on beliefs that can not be proven. Thus, professional journalists know or learn how to communicate with due respect, adhering to the standard of impartial and balanced reporting.



Let the people speak openly about their beliefs

- This is particularly important when religion and faith are a significant factor in the story, which should be recognized as such. If, for example, one mother said «I thank God for saving my child from illness,» then it should be quoted. Or, if a politician said he favors a law against abortion because he is a Catholic, he should be quoted. That does not mean that you would exclude additional questions or discussion to get a precise picture of one's convictions.
- In your reporting you should also represent new religions, or make closer acquaintance to some religion.
- Be very careful when reporting on topics related to religion. Be vigilant about the language you use, as well as the understanding and use of concepts. Check carefully all insufficiently familiar terms and statements of the sources of information before publishing.

Connect the religion with other areas

- The journalists who report on topics related to religion should be seen as a source of information that could be used in the context of reporting on other topics (political, economic, etc.).. When other journalists are working on a topic that in certain parts touches the religion, you as well-informed journalist, can offer a variety of sources and additional information.
- It would help your colleagues to expand the perspectives they are considering a given issue or a topic. Also, they would be interested in receiving information from this field in the future.

Find the right way to complement the knowledge

- The question is asked: whether a journalist should be religiously affiliated in order to be able to report on a religion? The answer is «no.»
- Just as it is not expected from the journalists who report on political parties to be party members, it is not expected from the journalists who report on topics related to religion, to be its followers.
- It is important to have the right information sources and to continuously upgrade your knowledge. When a source of information mentions quotation from the Bible, Koran or other religious texts, you need to study such explanations, to understand the meaning of what is said or motivation behind the statement. The educational institutions and teachers in this area are also relevant sources of information and explanations. Searching the Internet is also handy.

What is a good journalist who reports on topics related to religion like?

- He/she respect the role of religion in people's lives.
- Does not treat the interlocutor who has a certain religious affiliation as a representative of all people from that religion.
- Shows curiosity towards religion and a desire to learn more about it.
- Is able is to describe various beliefs well and correctly, even if personally disagrees with them.
- Has a desire to spend time with people belonging to different religions, to better understand their beliefs.
- Has no interest in imposing any religious beliefs.
- Is aware of balanced and honest reporting and understands that the story should include more than two concerned parties (if any).
- He/she discusses with the interlocutors with a certain religious affiliation as sources of information on other topics and issues.
- He/she has excellent writing skills to describe rituals, portaying a true picture to the audience.



Provide context

- Like in situations when reporting on ethnic groups, here as well, to offer true and complete picture about some events or conditions, you should provide additional information.
- One of the best ways in doing this is to connect the story on a topic related to religion to a trend or event in the country or globally. The audience gets a feeling that the topics and values that are discussed at local level are debated in a wider context.
- In order for everyone to get involved in the story, at any stage of its development, it is always important to provide additional information or context. It is useful to review the past, and the editorial policy of the media in reporting issues of this kind.
- It can help you understand what was the approach, whether there were any flaws, whether the reporting was only on the dominant religion, while others were neglected, how were other religions represented and so on.



Study the problems deeper

- Stereotypes and the problems arising from them, which are associated with religion, should be studied in detail. Investigative journalism should come to the fore in this area.
- Be careful not to repeat stereotypes about people with different religious affiliation. Particular care should be taken to the selection of the interlocutors, not to allow expressing attitudes that belittle other spiritual traditions and spread religious hatred.
- Examine the stereotypes that exist, their origin and influence, and try to find ways to overcome them.



RECOMMENDATIONS ON REPORTING RELATED TO GENDER ISSUES

- ◎ See the world with 'the eyes' of women and men.
- ◎ Make sure when editing a story to present, or to include the views of both women and men. Thus you will speak about reality from both perspectives.
- ◎ Women should not appear only in stories that relate only to them. Do not let be presumed which is true female and male role, although the journalists do that unconsciously, oppressed by stereotypes that are all around them, and within them.
- ◎ The guidelines provided by UNESCO on gender sensitive reporting³ state that it is important for men and women not to be isolated like in 'ghettos' and to avoid any separation based on gender.



Use the approach of 'equality' in describing women and men

- ◎ When describing women and men, keep a balanced approach. If you include a woman in the story, describe her the same way as men. If you do not describe the clothes or hair of a business man, why you do that when it comes to business woman if these data are not relevant to the story.

3. UNESCO Directions, available at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/file_download.php/97c2ea65149be7f3540d810612f7acb8S-9+Gender-sensitive+reporting.doc

- Careful use of vocabulary and images in the media will provide an objective picture to the public, and that positively affects people's consciousness.
 - ✓ Use neutral words that do not favor one's gender.
 - ✓ Avoid using words or phrases that make assumptions about gender.
 - ✓ Avoid using words and phrases that make assumptions about the way of thinking or the appearance of women, or on how men and women behave.

Several guidelines in the Manual of UNESCO on gender sensitive reporting⁴:

Detection and avoidance of reporting which is not sensitive in terms of gender

In continuation there are a few guidelines for questions we need to ask ourselves when writing or when we read reports from the media.

What are the sources of information?

-  How many of the sources of information are women, and how many are men?
-  How many of them are members of minorities?

4. The guidelines on gender sensitive reporting can be found at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/file_download.php/97c2ea65149be7f3540d810612f7acb8S-9+Gender-sensitive+reporting.doc

What is the angle of reporting?

- ✍ In whose interest the report serves?
- ✍ Is the report of public interest? For what audience?

Are there double standards in the report?

- ✍ Are there any contradictory, double standards? For example, empathy towards fathers who grow their own children because of the circumstances they are found, while for mothers it is seen as something more common.

Are there stereotypes in the report?

- ✍ How is a group shown in the story?
- ✍ Is the group always associated with certain characteristics?

What vocabulary is used?

- ✍ Is the vocabulary objective enough for the audience to form their own opinions?

Is there a context in the report?

- ✍ Is the story placed in context to help the audience to form their own opinions?

Whether used visual elements (graphics, photographs, illustrations, etc..) correspond to the content?

- ✍ Are the used pictures and illustrations contradictory to the content?
- ✍ Do they direct readers to understand the content of the story in a different way?



Make direct communication and understand the topics

- To find out which topics deserve media attention, organize meetings with various associations and talk about what they are working on, with a particular focus on gender equality.
- Encourage members of these associations to appear and give ideas for stories that are worthy publishing.
- Think about stories that refer to family violence and sexual harassment, because these are serious problems.
- Explore how this problem has been treated so far, in the environment where you report, which is the context, what are the consequences and so on.
- When it comes to reporting on women, the media often presents the issue of prostitution. This is a broad question which is being debated in the country and abroad. Try not to report with stereotypes, and that the messages you transmit do not encourage such a perception by the public. This is especially true of women for whom prostitution is the only source of income for their existence. Even if the woman is voluntarily a «sex worker»⁵, i.e. if no one is forcing her on that, try to understand her perspective.
- Another possible topic is reporting on women trafficking, which is also a big problem. Gather enough information, through continuous research and analysis, which will allow you to get the complete picture of this problem.

5. The term “sex worker” is used for prostitutes as a less insulting way to describe themselves and their profession.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SEXUAL MINORITIES

Considering the major role of media in creation or rejection of the stereotypes associated with the LGBT population⁶, in this section we give some basic recommendations.

1 Make direct communication and recognize the problems

- To discover the problems these minorities are facing, and thus properly present them to the public and defeating the existing stereotypes, it is very important to establish a communication with one of their member. Also, establish communication with the organizations which are working on protection of their rights.
- This way you will gain information first hand, you can determine how well they are represented in the media, whether the reports are in wrong direction, or whether something is being reported at all. This group of people, like all others, have their hopes, aspirations, dreams, fears, and families and careers.
- However, it is not always easy to come to them, to make personal contact and to hear their opinions. Therefore, sometimes the easiest approach is to contact organizations that represent them.

6. “LGBT” population is an abbreviation used for persons with following sexual preference: lesbians, “gay”-men, bisexuals and transgender.

Be wary of the language you use

- If other people use offensive terminology to this group, you must not do that. If, however, it is necessary to state someone else's statement which contains offensive wording, do it by paraphrasing.
- Professional reporting involves using neutral terms that do not constitute an insult and injury to the feelings of this population.

Constantly check the facts

- Check any information that you publish about this group of people. That, in fact, is among the most important rules in the exercise of the journalistic profession, no matter the topic of reporting. If, for example, you report that the number of people with HIV is greater among homosexuals than among heterosexuals, then you must prove it with facts. Whatever is the claim that you report, support that with the source behind the information. It happens that some experts abuse much of their expertise because of intolerance towards sexual minorities.

What are stereotypes?

Generalizations that are made by stereotypes may lead to a strong hatred among people.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The media should recognize their responsibility to represent people with special needs in a true and honest way, devoid of stereotypes and bias.

1 Make direct communication and recognize the problems

- Through direct communication with persons with special needs, you will become better acquainted with the problems they face and their expectations. They can best convey how they feel about the stereotypes of the public that directly affect their daily lives.
- Sometimes the stereotypes can have elements of truth. For example, there might be significant number of people with special needs among the homeless. In such situations you should feel responsibility to consider the wider context of the problem, and the factors that led to such a thing.
- It should be a professional challenge for the journalist to discover the roots of problems that occur in society, and possible ways of solving them. As a journalist, it is best to do that by consulting relevant and reliable sources of information.
- However, it can be hard to come to the right interlocutors, because people with physical or mental disabilities are often hidden from the society in which they live. If you can not talk directly with them, try to contact people from their surrounding (family, friends, colleagues, etc.).. They can also help in depicting the true picture of things.

- It would be useful to contact groups and nonprofit organizations that deal with this issue. Doctors and other professionals can help you with precise explanations, particularly if there are misunderstandings and contradictions.
- The problems of the persons with disabilities are not the only topic on which you can talk to them. For example, if you run into a person with special needs who is a successful professional or carries out some humanitarian work despite his disability, then the story has a greater value. Such people can send a strong message to the public and to those who face similar problems.

Be wary of the language you use

- You will be expected to gain more knowledge regarding the terminology that this group of people considers offensive. The media plays a powerful role in changing the manner of expression. You may think that a word is not so «offensive» and actually is the opposite.
- Always pay attention to the context in which you report about these people, not create a wrong perception among the public

What are stereotypes?

All media, regardless of their format, can contribute to promoting diversities and balanced reporting on diversities.



Reminder of useful questions for journalists

- ✍ Does the story provide a clear, honest and true way of presenting the individual?
- ✍ Is the person with special needs presented as helpless or as an independent?
- ✍ Does the person with special needs decide himself/herself on the way of life?
- ✍ Are those individuals represented in roles that are socially justified?
- ✍ Do they work / live / teach in an environment where there are people who do not have such problems?
- ✍ Are we sure that stories or images that we use do not support any negative stereotypes?
- ✍ Does the story omitt any important elements from the life of these individuals?
- ✍ Will the story or photograph contribute to their harassment or discrimination?



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REPORTING ON OLDER PERSONS

Further down there are several recommendations on how to report on this category of people.

Make direct communication and recognize the problems.

- When you contact directly with someone, you can best understand his feelings, the problems they encounter, and all that is important. From these meetings you can discover and experience how the elderly perceive themselves in the media and what they think is missing in the reporting.
- Another angle may be provided by organizations involved in providing assistance to older persons, associations or clubs they visit. Besides their problems, the focus of the conversation can be put on interesting happenings in their everyday life, which will enable these people to be represented in a better light.
- Represent the elderly people in «different» light
- As journalists, this can be achieved by making profile of older people who find themselves in different circumstances. The cases when a person after retirement continues to work and is successful is worth presenting to the public.
- Look for older people with unusual hobbies or someone who plays an exciting sports and other activities. Older people typically have great knowledge and skills and through their frequent presentation in the media you will help overcome the traditional stereotypes.



RECOMMENDATIONS ON REPORTING ON REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Refugees and displaced persons have the right to be heard and to tell their stories. Fear of punishment in their country or place of residence, stereotypes, negative reporting and hostile attitude towards them often restrict them in their communication with journalists.

Try to communicate with them and discuss the problems they face. Moreover, it is necessary to respect the following rules:

- ① Be clear about the purpose of the conversation.
- ② Show sensitivity in terms of their right to remain anonymous.
- ③ Get informed about the circumstances which lead them to their status, the countries of their origin and so on.
- ④ If you want to publish their photos, ask permission.

Analysis of prior reporting of the medium

- ◎ Journalists reporting in this area first must make a comprehensive analysis of how the medium in which they work reported earlier, because it will greatly determine the future approach. If it is determined that there were some omissions, and there were reportings in a negative context (such as in stories about crime, fear of people from refugee and displaced), or that the medium showed a tendency to ignore the problems of

refugees or displaced persons , then the journalists will have to invest more energy in their work. Also, the journalist will have to check whether the stories which talked negative about this group of people, used only one side as a source of information, and whether the refugees were given the opportunity to personally express their thoughts.



Make direct communication and understand the problems

- Personal communication is of great importance in understanding the way refugees or displaced persons live. At this stage it is necessary to achieve communication with multiple sources. Apart from refugees and visits to the locations where they live, you can talk with people in their environment, support organizations (local and international), the services that provide assistance, etc.. The number of involved parties is increasing, and by consulting with them you will get a much clearer picture on what is happening.
- This way you will get a «mediator» role in bringing the everyday problems and traumas that these individuals face to the wider public, which will raise awareness to improve living conditions.
- Thoroughly consider the reasons for the status of refugees and displaced persons.
- Often, very little attention is paid to abuses of human rights and the conflicts that force people to flee their homes. By providing a broader context to the problem, you will increase the quality of debate on these issues.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON DIFFERENT RACES

In order to report objectively on different races, it is necessary to have a strong focus on usage of the essential tools for professional journalism. In addition, we give some basic ways to report on different races in a professional way.

Sharpen your senses

- First, you need to deal with your own prejudices, fears, and with the insufficient knowledge about this area. It can all be accomplished by reading, informing yourself and discussing.

Understand the broad picture

- The stories of different races contain many universal elements, such as superiority, courage, conflict, fear, ignorance, hatred, pain, confusion, etc.. However, you need to get outside of this framework and try to get a wide range of sources of information. In such a way you will get a complex story that will present different perspectives.

Appropriately define the topic on different races

- It is desirable to answer the following questions: Does the story concern the relations between races? Does a part of the story cover that issue?

- Reporting with a clearly defined topic and a clear direction can easily answer these questions. You should not rely on what the sources of information dictate with what they say.

Be wary of the language you use

- When talking about this topic, avoid clichés in expression. For example, instead saying that «the rally is organized to represent the racial harmony» you can remove the word «racial». You should always try to find new words that capture the true picture.

Say what you think

- Clear expression is essential in reporting on this topic. Ambiguity leads to loss of credibility and confidence in what you write.

What are stereotypes?

Stereotypes often lead to the marginalization of certain groups in society. But when the media fails to recognize and understand the effects of stereotyping, then it will not only ignore them, but the media can also do something against these trends.

Provide context

- One of the fundamental questions in journalism is «why»? Without the context provided, this question often remains unanswered. By providing context you help people better understand the problems. It will help them decide by themselves on how to form opinions and to draw the conclusion. Sometimes the context will show that it is not about issues related to racial differences, but for something completely different.

Identify people in a careful way

- It is necessary to examine why there is a need to identify people with some of the races. In this way, you can tell assuredly why some individuals are defined by their racial background.



THE CONCEPT OF PEACE JOURNALISM

Peace journalism is an approach in reporting on wars or conflicts that is striving for their peaceful resolution and that provides an understanding of the general picture of the causes, consequences and motives behind the conflicts themselves.

Contrary to this would be reporting that increases tensions and deepen divisions and differences between the parties involved in the conflict.

The peace journalism should strive to minimize the gap between opposing parties by not repeating the ‘facts’ that demonize or set the stage for conflict⁷.



Principles in peace journalism

In continuation we review the principles that characterize peace journalism⁸:

1. **Avoid** to represent the conflict as a clash between two sides that are competing for one goal and where the logical result would be one side to win and the other to lose. Instead, take the sides of many small groups, who aspire to very different goals. This will create more space for a wide range of results.
2. **Avoid** sharp distinctions between “us” and “them”.

7. McGoldrick A. and Lynch J. (2001). “What is Peace Journalism.” Activate, the quarterly journal of IMPACS, London, The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society

8. Ibid

3. **Avoid** connecting the conflict with something that only happens in a specific place and in a specific time where there is violence. Instead, you should try to determine the relationship and the consequences for people elsewhere, now and in the future.
4. **Avoid** assessing violence or policy of violence only in terms of visible effects. Find ways to inform on invisible effects. For example, long-term consequences of any damage and psychological trauma.
5. **Avoid** constant focus on what divides and separates the parties. You should try to ask questions that may reveal the common points of interest.
6. **Avoid** reporting only on violence and describing the “horror”. Show how people are blocked and frustrated or humiliated in everyday life, as a way of explaining the violence.
7. **Avoid** blaming the others that they “started first”. Instead, try to find out how common problems and questions lead to consequences that have not been expected by either side.
8. **Avoid** focusing solely on the suffering, fears and the oppression of only one side. Instead, the suffering, fears and oppression of all sides should be equally considered as something that is important to be published.
9. **Avoid** terms such as, for example, words are powerless, destroyed, helpless, pathetic, tragedy, etc., which only says what has been done or what could have been done to a group of people. Instead, you need to report on what was done and what can be done by the people. You do not just ask the people how they feel, but for how they manage the situation and what they think. Whether they can offer any solutions?
10. **Avoid** using imprecise emotional words to describe what has happened to people. You should always be precise about what you know.
11. **Avoid** ‘demonizing’ adjectives, as wicked, cruel, brutal or barbaric. Instead, you need to report what you know about inappropriate behavior and should provide as much information about the authenticity of the statements or descriptions of other people about that behavior.

12. **Avoid** “demonizing” labels as terrorist, extremist, fanatic or fundamentalist. Instead, people should be called by the names they give themselves. Or, you should be precise in the description.
13. **Avoid** focusing solely on abuses of human rights, attacks and inappropriate behavior on only one side. List ALL those who behave improperly and treat accusations from all sides in the conflict as equally serious.
14. **Avoid** stating any opinion or statement as a ascertained fact. Instead, you should convey to the readers or audience what was being said.
15. **Avoid** welcoming the signing of documents by the leaders who lead to military victory or cease fire, as something that undeniably leads to the creation of peace. Instead, try to report on issues that remain unresolved and that can lead people to perform further acts of violence.
16. **Avoid** representing only the expectations of the leaders on “our side” for a solution to the conflict. Consider and examine the peace initiatives, no matter where they come from.

CODE OF JOURNALISTS OF MACEDONIA

PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT:

Freedom of the media is undeniable.

Main duty of the journalist is to respect the truth and right of the public to be informed, in accordance to Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

The journalists have a role of transmitters of information, ideas and opinions, and have a right to comment. By respecting the ethical virtues and professional standards regarding the presentation of information, the journalists shall be honest, objective and will report promptly.

Right and obligation of the journalists is to strive to prevent censorship and distortion of news.

Having in mind their role in the building of democracy and civic society, the journalists shall defend the human rights, dignity and freedom, shall respect the pluralism of ideas and opinions, shall contribute to strengthening of the legal state and shall participate in the control over the government and other subjects in the public life.

BASED ON THESE PRINCIPLES AND ETHICAL VALUES:

1. The journalists have right to free access to all sources of information that are of public interest.

The journalists shall publish correct, verified information and will not conceal essential information or forge documents. If given information cannot be confirmed or if it is a matter of assumption, i.e. speculation, that should be noted and published.

Correctness of the information ought to be verified as much as possible;

2. If the journalist is prevented from coming to an information, he/she has the right to inform the public about that;

3. The journalist shall strive to provide publication of correction, denial or reply in cases when given information is found to be incorrect.;

4. The journalist shall point out the source of information, but if the source demands to remain anonymous the journalist shall protect him;

5. The journalist shall respect the rule of law and will publish nothing that is on the contrary with the public interest;

6. The journalist must not use the media he/she works in for publication or concealing of information in order to gain personal benefit.

Bribe, corruption and racketeering cannot be put in context with the journalistic profession.

Influence from advertising and other commercial motives on the freedom of informing must not be allowed.

There should be demarcation between advertising and journalistic text with illustration;

7. The journalist shall respect the privacy of every person, except in cases when that is on the contrary with the public interest.

The journalist is obliged to respect the personal pain and grief;

8. The manner of informing in case of accident, elementary disaster, war, family tragedy, sickness, court procedures must be free from sensationalism.

The principle of presumption of innocence, reporting for all involved parties in the legal dispute without suggesting verdict, will be applied when reporting on court procedures;

9. The journalist must not interview or photograph children under 16 years of age without agreement from the parents or legal guardians, unless that is in accordance to the children rights.

The same refers to people with special needs, who are not able to decide rationally;

10. The journalists shall not consciously create or process information that jeopardize the human rights and freedoms, shall not use hate speech and shall not encourage discrimination of any sort (nationality, religion, sex, social class, language, sexual orientation, political orientation...);

11. The journalist shall observe the general social standards of decency and shall respect the ethnic, cultural and religious differences in the Republic of Macedonia;

12. Plagiarism is unacceptable.

Quotes must not be used if the author or the source is not specified;

13. The journalist ought to make distinction between facts and opinions, news and comments;

14. Reporting on political processes, especially elections, must be impartial, balanced and fair.

The journalist must make professional distance from the political subjects;

15. The journalist must maintain the culture of speech and ethics.

Impolite manner of communicating with the public is on the contrary with the journalistic profession;

16. The journalist shall defend the reputation and dignity of his/hers profession, shall urge mutual solidarity and difference in opinions and will not misuse the media he/she works in for personal vendetta against other persons, including his colleagues;
17. The journalist has the right to refuse a given task if that is on the contrary with the principles of this code.

FINAL PROVISIONS:

The journalists who work in accordance to this code enjoy support from their media outlets and professional organization.

In accordance to the Laws of the Republic of Macedonia, the journalists shall accept only the court of their colleagues regarding the profession and shall be free from political and other influence.

The Council of Honor is responsible for observing of the principles of this code.

Skopje 14.11.2001

Journalists of the Republic of Macedonia



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