

EBU

OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES



THE PLEDGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

We, the public service media organizations united in the European Broadcasting Union, belong to the citizens we serve.

We accept the challenges of the digital revolution, which has changed and enriched our relationships with audiences at mass and individual level.

We are developing new ways to serve our public, anytime and anywhere, on new, emerging and existing platforms.

We are committed to including everyone, and to enhancing every community within our societies.

We exist to meet the democratic, cultural and social needs of Europe. By being free at the point of use, we are determined to reach every member of the public.

We want to play a defining role in guaranteeing freedom of expression and pluralism of views.

We believe in an open and transparent world of communication for the common good, beyond the profit motive.

We strive to perform to the highest standards, with moral integrity and maximum efficiency.

We realize that trust is at the centre of the relationship with our audiences, a trust that must be earned each and every day.

Jean-Paul Philippot
EBU President

Ingrid Deltente
EBU Director General

INTRODUCTION

The European Broadcasting Union, headquartered in Geneva, is the world's foremost alliance of public service media organizations. A global benchmark for the media industry, the EBU provides knowledge, expertise and services both within Europe and around the world. It is the operator of EUROVISION and EURORADIO.

At the Union's 2012 General Assembly, EBU Members from Europe and beyond adopted unanimously six key values which define why public service media (PSM) are indispensable in true democratic societies.

- **universality**
- **independence**
- **excellence**
- **diversity**
- **accountability**
- **innovation**

A set of Editorial Principles derived from these principles requires PSM journalists to be:

- **impartial & independent**
- **fair & respectful**
- **accurate & relevant**
- **connected & accountable**

These principles have in turn been fleshed out into a comprehensive set of Editorial Guidelines.

This booklet brings together the Values, Editorial Principles and Editorial Guidelines as a working tool to help journalists and editors strengthen their work and relationship with society.

THE SIX CORE VALUES OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

1. UNIVERSALITY

- We aim to reach and offer our content to all segments of society, with no-one excluded. Everyone, everywhere.
- We strongly underline the importance of sharing and expressing a plurality of views and ideas.
- We strive to create a public sphere, in which all citizens can form their own opinions and ideas. We are aiming for inclusion and social cohesion.
- We are multi-platform, sharing our content in all kinds of ways.
- We are accessible for everyone, without thresholds.
- We enable our audiences, and each individual, to engage and participate in a democratic society.

2. INDEPENDENCE

- We want to be trusted programme-makers, trustworthy in all fictional and non-fictional programming, in all genres and formats, from news to entertainment, from science to sport, from culture to education.
- We make our choices only in the interest of our audiences.
- We strive to be completely impartial and independent from political, commercial and other influences and ideologies. Free to challenge the powerful, test prevailing assumptions, and contribute to an informed citizenship.
- We want to be autonomous in all aspects within our remit such as programming, editorial decision-making, staffing.
- Our commitment to independence needs to be underpinned by safeguards in law, and our commitment to the safety of journalists needs to be underpinned in all our actions.

3. EXCELLENCE

- We act with high standards of integrity and professionalism and quality; we strive to create benchmarks within the media industries.
- We foster our talent and train our staff.
- We want to empower, enable and enrich our audiences. We want our work to result in maximum participation and involvement.
- We understand that our audiences are also participators in our activities, and even at times contributors of news and programming.

4. DIVERSITY

- Our audiences consist of a diverse range of interest groups: differing generations, cultures, religions, majorities as well as minorities. So we strive to be diverse and pluralistic in the genres we are programming, the views we are expressing, and the people who work with us.
- We support and seek to give voice to a plurality of competing views – from those with different backgrounds, histories and stories. Conscious of the creative enrichment that can derive from co-existing diversities, we want to help build a more inclusive, less fragmented society.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY

- We want to be open. We listen to our audiences and engage in a permanent and meaningful debate.
- We publish our editorial guidelines. We explain. We correct our mistakes. We strive to report on our policies, budgets, editorial choices.
- We are transparent and subject to constant public scrutiny. We want our audiences to understand the workings of our media organizations.
- We strive to be efficient and managed according to the principles of good governance.

6. INNOVATION

- We want to enrich the media environment of the countries and regions we work in.
- We strive to be a driving force of innovation and creativity.
- We aim at new formats, new technologies, new ways of connectivity with our audiences.
- We want to attract, retain and train our staff so that they can participate in and shape the digital future, serving our public.

THE VALUES TRANSLATED

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

1. IMPARTIAL & INDEPENDENT

We are completely impartial and independent from political or commercial interests and any other influences and ideologies.

Trust underpins our existence.

We are multiplatform: our principles apply to all of our content and productions on all of our platforms and in all of our programming.

2. FAIR & RESPECTFUL

In our reporting we are fair and honest, and conscious and respectful of differing viewpoints and opinions.

We strive to paint an authentic picture of the world we live in based on editorial judgment alone, untouched by governmental and commercial interests.

We treat our audiences, sources and every individual with respect.

3. ACCURATE & RELEVANT

Our stories are checked and double checked. Correct facts and figures are provided with accurate background information.

In our reporting we provide context and background to help our audiences to understand our complex social, political and cultural world.

4. CONNECTED & ACCOUNTABLE

We understand that our audiences are also participants in our activities and sometimes contributors to news and programming.

We want our audiences to understand the workings of media organizations.

We want to be a trusted guide in the digital world. We are transparent and open-minded.



1. IMPARTIAL & INDEPENDENT

Trust lies at the heart of our relationship with our audiences. Our news and current affairs programmes and content ought to be the proof of this precious relationship.

- We operate with honesty, integrity, impartiality, accuracy and fairness.
- Our editorial choices are based on professional judgment and experience only.
- We exercise our editorial freedom to produce any story/content we think is correct, based on our editorial judgment.
- Nothing we do should cast doubt on the absolute independence, impartiality or integrity of our organizations.
- Our reporting and choices are balanced; we do not aim to please or displease any particular sector of our audiences. We are open minded with regard to any story or event in every part of society. We are not swayed by political or commercial influences or pressure, financial or otherwise.
- In our reporting, our choices and our entire output, we strive to share all relevant stories with our audiences, providing an honest summary of events, locally or remotely.
- We provide our audiences with context and background to enable them to understand the complexity of the world we live in.
- We, as journalists and editors working for public service media/public service broadcasters, do not express personal opinions in the content we share, unless the content is explicitly identified as an opinion piece or editorial. We respect the freedom of every individual within our organizations to be active and outspoken citizens/members of society, but we expect them, in return, not to engage in activities, be they political or otherwise, that could harm our organizations.
- Staff will not actively support or promote causes, politicians and/or political parties or other individuals, commercial interests, etc. In particular, we expect our political desks not to be actively engaged with political parties and/or politicians; our economics desks not to be actively engaged in, for example, investing; and our sports desks not to support any particular team or sportsperson.

- No activities undertaken by individuals within our organizations should raise doubt over the professionalism of our editorial decision-making.
- Above all, we protect our sources and their anonymity, especially when there is a danger that our sources will face harm or damage in any way if revealed.
- If there are sound editorial reasons not to reveal our sources, we explain them.
- We protect and support our journalists when they face prosecution or any kind of undue pressure because of sound journalistic work.
- We are open to any story from any source in any place, when we think it is of relevance to the audiences we work for.
- We act with a sense of proportion, especially regarding stories that may be considered as 'hype'.
- We treat news in all its forms with impartiality; we provide a broad, balanced range of relevant perspectives and opinions. However, impartiality does not require all relevant, differing opinions to be presented in one item of news broadcast/content. This can be accomplished over a longer period of reporting, through comprehensive, complementary programming.
- All our personnel should be sensitive to the dangers of conflicts of interest; they must address any concerns about this with senior staff.
- Freelance staff, while working in other positions outside our organization, will be required to declare any personal interest which may affect their work with our organizations.
- Staff will not be involved in campaigns of any kind, unless approved by the editor-in- chief/director of news or other senior staff.
- Staff will not be actively involved in preparing third parties for interviews, writing speeches or press releases for others, nor undertake any other activity that raises questions about the integrity of our organizations.

2. FAIR & RESPECTFUL

We take our audiences seriously and treat them with respect. We work for them.

- We are open about our objectives.
- We are especially aware that we will approach our subjects with respect.
- Victims of violence, crime, war, conflicts, accidents or disasters should be treated with the utmost respect – as should their relatives. We are aware that showing a person in their hour of need or suffering and especially at the moment of death, may be unacceptably intrusive, disrespectful and exploitative. We make difficult editorial decisions with extreme care; senior staff must always be involved.
- Before reporting in a way that identifies vulnerable people in such circumstances, their relatives will have been informed as necessary.
- People who are under suspicion for crimes are considered innocent until convicted; our reporting should reflect this.
- We cannot avoid showing disturbing material in our news broadcasts, on the web and live streams, especially when we are dealing with war, conflicts, riots, disasters, or terrorist attacks. We warn our audiences in advance of imminent graphic pictures. Nevertheless, we explicitly explain that we aim to reach mature audiences with our common newscasts, with the exception of specially developed news programmes and sites aimed at children and younger people.
- In the ways we use our cameras and microphones, we show we are recording news and events, not enhancing their impact, for example through the use of extreme close-ups; this also applies to the way we will edit our footage later.
- We are aware of the strong impact that graphic material (war, conflict, disasters, etc.) can have. However, we have a duty to edit our stories with care, knowing that pictures, for example of war, must not be sanitized to hide the bloody reality. We will show reality in a responsible way. If necessary we will warn our audiences in advance.
- When we use footage from our archives, especially if people are involved, we are aware that this material quickly loses its relevance.

We do not deceptively use images of people out of the context in which it was recorded.

- Using extreme footage, for example of people at the moment of death or in pain, is never acceptable to illustrate other stories and events.
- If agreed and based upon sound editorial decision-making, we will protect people by efficiently blurring their faces and or disguising their voices; this should only be done if this is the only way to bring (part of) a relevant, important story to the viewer or listener.
- We identify ourselves as journalists working for our media organizations/PSM. Nevertheless, it may be necessary not to reveal that we are working as journalists when this is the only way to gather information for an important story. If we consider a long-term undercover operation, this should be decided by the editor-in-chief/director of news or senior staff, setting the standards for this specific action.
- We do not pay for the information we use or reward our sources in any other way than by revealing a story, if relevant.
- If we tape any conversation, we normally inform the person we are talking to first.
- We do not use hidden microphones or hidden cameras lightly. The use of hidden microphones or hidden cameras may be acceptable if it is in the interest of our audiences and the stories we want to make or reveal. But we should be truly convinced that this is the only way to produce a relevant, important story. The editor- in-chief/director of news, or other senior staff, must agree with this way of working, to be able to accept full responsibility.
- We are aware that 'professionals' in a mediated society (such as politicians, representatives of big companies, etc.) are more experienced in dealing with journalists from radio and television than ordinary members of the public, i.e. our audiences. This should inform our behaviour towards them.
- We respect the privacy of the people involved in our reporting. However, we are aware that we must weigh the importance of a person's expectation of preserving their private sphere against the public interest in publication of their roles, deeds and images/pictures.

- Our interviews may be critical but they will always be respectful.
- We will inform our interviewees of our objectives and that the recordings will be edited.
- Our editing will be instrumental in clarifying the opinions and the views of the people we interviewed.
- In general we do not use footage that has not been shot by us or the news agencies that work for us, especially if we are reporting on the organizations/companies that provide us with the material. However, if we have good reason to use such footage, for example if it is of unique value to the story we want to tell, we inform our audiences of the origin of the footage. We take care to ensure that our reporting will not be influenced if we use these facilities.
- We do not stage or arrange events for the purposes of our reporting.
- We accept news embargoes only if there is good editorial reason to do so and to prepare for relevant and high-quality reporting on complicated issues; we act only in the interest of our audiences.

Live coverage

- Live coverage carries with it heavy responsibility, especially when we are reporting on war, conflict, terrorist acts and disasters. We should be prepared not to show pictures unsuitable for live television or in live streams on websites/mobile phones (e.g. people being killed or seriously wounded, extreme violence, or other material offensive to taste and decency). We should always be able to make our own editorial decisions on the live coverage we provide, keeping in mind the need, wherever possible, to preserve human dignity.
- Our live reporting should never be instrumental in terrorist attacks or political pressure or other forms of manipulation; we are especially aware of the need to make our choices based only on professional considerations.
- We are aware that our coverage, our reporters, cameras and microphones on the spot, could indirectly encourage violence or rioting. We take this into account in making our editorial decisions. In certain circumstances we will consider withdrawing from the scene to avoid giving rise to these sorts of reactions.

- If we criticize people or organizations in live broadcasts or streams by third parties, we should enable them to reply as soon as possible.

Children

- We make every effort to protect children and young people from exposure to offensive and harmful material.
- We must not broadcast material that might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of children and young people; we always check this principle with the right they have to be well-informed on a level that they can comprehend.



3. ACCURATE & RELEVANT

In every society information plays a key role in empowering citizens to form their own opinions and play an active role in society.

- Our standards, principles and guidelines are the same on every platform. We share our content and programming.
- Our reporting is accurate. We correct our mistakes.
- In a fluid, 24/7 society, we understand that speed in providing news stories is important. However, the need to guarantee accuracy is even more important.
- Our editorial staff are experienced and capable of making important editorial decisions.
- We check and double-check the information we use.
- We only rely on accurate and trustworthy sources.
- We use our digital platforms to:
 - be a trusted guide on the web
 - enable access to our archives
 - create live streams
 - publish documents and other information to support our reporting
 - extend our reporting by providing extra material/footage and linking to other sites to enable our audiences to enrich their knowledge
 - engage in debate
 - publish our policy, budgets, etc.
 - correct mistakes
 - take up user-generated content
- We value the engagement of every member of our audiences in working together with us on news stories, while providing so-called user-generated content (UGC), e.g. video, stills, information, etc.
- When we make UGC part of our reporting, we earmark it and take full responsibility for this. This means we consider UGC as another source of basic material that should be checked, double-checked and evaluated for its relevance.

- As a general rule we do not pay for UGC.
- We make clear in advance and on our sites how we handle UGC, as well as how we deal with copyright issues.



4. CONNECTED & ACCOUNTABLE

The digital infrastructure creates a range of new possibilities to connect with our audiences and be truly interactive and open.

It also enables us to build trust by debating our choices, correcting our mistakes, and being transparent in the ways media organizations perform their duties. We want to demystify journalism.

- We are willing to explain the editorial choices we make; we engage in a meaningful debate on our editorial choices and behaviour.
- We especially use our digital services to explain our choices, provide answers, and react to remarks made.
- We appreciate the remarks, perspectives and opinions of every individual in our audiences and act accordingly.
- We realize that actively engaging in social networks and blogs means we are engaging in dialogue, i.e. two-way communication. We enable our audiences to comment and participate in debate. We clarify on our websites how we deal with these comments.
- We moderate the comments. We reserve the right to censor blog posts and other online contributions that are racist, pornographic, damaging to children, or in other ways inappropriate.
- As PSM we actively engage in social networks; we encourage our staff to do the same. We encourage our staff, editors, anchors, reporters and foreign correspondents to engage in blogging that provides insight into the ways they produce their stories, and in all other decisions and happenings that are relevant to the ways our journalists make their decisions and produce their stories.
- We link to other sites to enable our audiences to have access to other information and as a means of extending our reporting.
- We take responsibility for linking; we are not responsible for the sites we link to and we make clear to our users when they are leaving our own sites. As a consequence we must be aware of the content of the sites we link to.

- One of our objectives is to be a trusted guide on the internet. We do not link to sites that we do not consider justifiable or appropriate.
- We are especially aware of protecting children from a digital environment that can harm them.
- If we link to sites dealing with a specific theme or ideology, we provide all the relevant differing views.
- By linking to other sites we make sure we do not support commercial interests.
- We publish documents and other relevant information that are the basis for our reporting and research on our website.
- We publish our policies, rules, regulations and our yearly budget and other relevant documents on our websites.
- We make clear how complaints are dealt with.
- All members of our organizations, especially our anchors, reporters, foreign correspondents and editors, are aware that in everything they do, write or post, they will be considered as part of our organizations. They will act accordingly.
- None of our editorial staff is allowed to use social networks and blogs to express opinions and views that are damaging to our organizations or which raise questions about their independence and impartiality.
- No one will reveal information that is only of relevance to our organizations.
- Remarks on policy will only be made by those members of staff who are responsible for this.



OUR MISSION :
MAKING PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA INDISPENSABLE

EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION

L'Ancienne-Route 17A
CH-1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Switzerland

Contact person :
Radka Betcheva
T +41 (0)22 717 20 06
betcheva@ebu.ch
dgo@ebu.ch
www.ebu.ch