

CODE OF ETHICS OF MONTENEGRIN JOURNALISTS

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CONTENTS

CODE OF ETHICS OF MONTENEGRIN JOURNALISTS	5
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 1.....	8
1.1. General Standards	8
1.2. Accuracy.....	9
1.3. Press Release.....	9
1.4. Election Campaign Rallies	10
1.5. Use of Social Media	10
1.6. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).....	12
1.7. Intellectual Property	12
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 2.....	14
2.1. Comment and Opinion	14
2.2. Interview	14
2.3. Handling of Sources.....	15
2.4. Symbolic Images	17
2.5. Embargo	17
2.6. Results of Public Opinion Polls.....	18
2.7. Letters from Readers/Listeners/Viewers	18
2.8. Online Comments.....	19
2.9. Medical Research and Treatments	20
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 3.....	22
3.1. Reply and Correction.....	22
3.2. Documentation.....	23
3.3. Right to Be Forgotten	23

GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 4.....	24
4.1. Hate Speech	24
4.2. Reporting on Criminal Offences	25
4.3. Harm	25
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 5.....	26
5.1. Investigative Journalism	26
5.2. Reporting in Special Circumstances.....	26
5.3. Exclusive Information.....	27
5.4. Payment for Information	27
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 6.....	28
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 7	29
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 8.....	33
8.1. The Interests of Children	33
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 9.....	35
9.1. Reporting on Criminal Offences, Investigations and Court Proceedings.....	35
9.2. Reporting on Violence.....	38
9.3. Coordination with Competent Authorities, “Media Silence”	38
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 10.....	39
10.1. Professional Independence	39
10.2. Distinction Between News Content and Advertising ..	40
10.3. Public Relations Materials.....	40
10.4. Transparency of Media Interests	40
GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPLE 11.....	41
11.1. Solidarity.....	41

CODE OF ETHICS OF MONTENEGRIN JOURNALISTS

(Basic Principles)

A journalist serves the public interest.

A journalist has a duty to defend freedom and the right to collect and disseminate information without obstruction, as well as the right to free comment and criticism.

The credibility of journalists and the journalistic profession is based on professional honesty, integrity and knowledge.

A journalist must be a critical observer of those who exercise social, political and economic power when reporting on matters of public interest.

It is in the interest of every journalist, and it is their duty, to adhere to this Code.

1. A journalist's duty is to respect the truth and to persistently seek it, always bearing in mind the public's right to be informed and the human need for justice and humane values.

2. For a journalist, facts are fundamental, and their obligation is to place them in the proper context and prevent their misuse, whether in text, image or sound.

Rumours and assumptions must be clearly identified as such.

News and commentary must be clearly separated.

3. A journalist has a duty to complete incomplete information and correct inaccurate information.

This particularly applies to information that may cause harm to someone.

Corrections must be appropriately highlighted. Any changes made in accordance with this principle must be clearly indicated.

4. A journalist shall mention a person's race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, physical or mental condition or illness, as well as political affiliation, only when this is necessary to provide complete information in the public interest.

5. When collecting information in any form, a journalist must use professionally ethical and legally permitted methods.

Any deviation from this rule is permitted only in cases where these methods are insufficient and where there is an overriding public interest in providing the public with information of exceptional importance.

6. It is the right and duty of a journalist to protect confidential sources of information.

7. A journalist must respect the right to privacy.

The right to privacy is inversely proportional to the importance of the public function performed by an individual. In all cases, the human dignity of every individual must be respected.

8. A journalist is obliged to protect the integrity of children and minors.

9. When reporting on investigations and court proceedings, a journalist must not prejudge the outcome of judicial proceedings. However, a journalist has the duty and responsibility to report on different facts and circumstances related to a specific case.

10. A journalist must not seek or accept privileges of any kind that could compromise or cast doubt on their independence and impartiality, or undermine editorial freedom.

11. A journalist demonstrates professional solidarity and supports colleagues who are exposed to pressure, threats or restrictions on freedom of expression, while respecting ethical principles and responsibility towards the public.

While being prepared to subject their work to constant public scrutiny, a journalist should also be willing to submit their work to review by an impartial body responsible for safeguarding the reputation of the profession.

GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE CODE

Guidelines for Principle 1

A journalist's duty is to respect the truth and to persistently seek it, always bearing in mind the public's right to be informed and the human need for justice and humane values.

1.1. General Standards

A journalist should uphold the highest professional and ethical standards.

Journalistic ethics is based on the conscience of the journalist. Ethical responsibility is individual and cannot be transferred to an editor on the grounds that the journalist was obliged to follow their instructions.

From a professional perspective, a journalist must exercise due diligence and take all reasonable steps to ensure that they publish only accurate information and that their comments are honest. Due journalistic diligence refers to the ethical and professional obligation of journalists, editors and other media employees to take the necessary steps to ensure that every activity meets the highest possible standard of accuracy.

A journalist must never publish unfounded allegations against an individual with the sole purpose of damaging their reputation.

A journalist has the right to refuse an assignment that is con-

trary to this Code of Ethics. An editor has an obligation to inform a journalist of any changes made to their text.

A journalist must preserve their professional and ethical independence from any public or private interest, including commercial and other interests of the media organisation.

1.2. Accuracy

- (a) Before publishing a piece, a journalist should ensure that all appropriate measures have been taken to verify its accuracy.

A journalist must strive to provide comprehensive reports on events and must not conceal or suppress essential information. In order to ensure impartial and objective reporting, a journalist must seek comments from all relevant parties and persons referred to in the report.

- (b) The public's right to know cannot justify sensationalist reporting. Therefore, a journalist must not distort information by exaggerating, placing undue emphasis on one aspect of a story, or reporting in a one-sided manner.

A journalist must avoid headlines or promotional slogans that could mislead the public about the essence of an event or phenomenon.

Facts must not be distorted by being presented outside the context in which they occurred.

1.3. Press Release

Press releases and statements issued by representatives of public authorities, political parties, public services, associations, clubs and other interest groups must be clearly identified as such.

1.4. Election Campaign Rallies

When reporting on election campaign rallies, a journalist must report accurately and must not allow personal opinions to affect the accuracy and fairness of reporting. Journalists and media outlets must clearly identify and distinguish between campaign activities and the official activities of public officials during election campaigns.

Such an approach affirms citizens' right to accurate information and supports the principle of equal opportunities for all political parties and other participants in the electoral process.

Pre-produced material provided by political parties should only be used when there is no other way to provide coverage of their specific activities or rallies. The use of such material must always be appropriately identified.

A journalist must respect the legally prescribed election silence period, without prejudice to their right and duty to report on all matters of public interest.

1.5. Use of Social Media

When publishing professional content on private accounts on social media platforms, a journalist is obliged to respect the ethical and professional standards established by this Code. Even when expressing personal views, due consideration must be given to the potential impact of such posts on the reputation of the journalist or media organisation. The same obligations and duties apply to the activities of organisations on social media through their institutional profiles and accounts.

A journalist is expected to respect the same principles on their private social media accounts when using them to express views on issues of public interest.

A professional journalist should apply the same standards of accuracy verification when publishing content on private profiles. Spreading rumours or unverified information may seriously undermine professional credibility, particularly when reporting on emergencies or current events.

A journalist is obliged to refrain from using offensive, inflammatory or defamatory language, as well as from expressing views on controversial issues in a manner that may undermine their objectivity and professional reputation.

A journalist must pay particular attention to the accounts they engage with, as well as to the content of comments made by third parties, especially when such accounts are publicly accessible. Activities on social media must not undermine ethical and professional obligations. Even when faced with provocation or criticism, a journalist should maintain professionalism and avoid conflicts and provocative responses. A journalist must also be familiar with the rules, privacy protections and behavioural standards of each platform they use, in order to avoid suspensions or sanctions, particularly where such measures could negatively affect their work or the work of the media organisation.

Information obtained in a professional context that is confidential, exclusive or under embargo must not be shared on personal accounts before it has been published by the media organisation.

A journalist has a duty to protect the confidentiality of sources and information that is not in the public domain, both in their professional work and online. Confidential information from their media organisation must not be disclosed, including sensitive stories or assignments relating to the journalist or their colleagues, particularly where such disclosure could endanger journalists' safety.

A journalist should maintain transparency on social media. If content has been published by mistake or is inappropriate, it should be corrected and the correction explained in a subsequent post, and an apology should be issued where necessary.

1.6. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Media content created, produced or significantly modified using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies must be clearly labelled as such where failure to do so could lead audiences to misunderstand or misrepresent actual facts and events.

No content generated by or with the assistance of AI may be published without human review and approval. In all cases, journalists and editors bear full responsibility for the content they publish, regardless of the extent to which AI has been used.

A journalist must actively promote the ethical and responsible use and understanding of AI tools with the aim of improving the quality of journalism and media content.

Journalistic content created and distributed using AI tools must comply with all ethical and professional standards established by this Code.

1.7. Intellectual Property

A journalist has a duty to respect intellectual property rights in accordance with the applicable legislation.

A journalist must not use or reproduce content created by third parties without their permission. Third-party content may be used in the form of brief quotations and references, with attribution to the author and publication, and solely for the legitimate purpose of informing the public.

A journalist may also use other third-party publications and reports as clearly identified sources of information and for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of information. When using third-party content in accordance with these rules, a journalist is obliged to comply with applicable ethical and professional standards.

Guidelines for Principle 2

For a journalist, facts are fundamental, and their obligation is to place them in the proper context and prevent their misuse, whether in text, image or sound.

Rumours and assumptions must be clearly identified as such.

News and commentary must be clearly separated.

2.1. Comment and Opinion

Facts are fundamental, while comments and opinions must be freely expressed.

Comments must not be presented in a way that creates the impression that they convey established facts. Where comments and factual information are not clearly separated, a journalist is obliged to provide appropriate context so that the public can properly distinguish between the two. In doing so, different media formats and styles must be taken into account.

2.2. Interview

- a) An interview is considered journalistically sound if it has been authorised by the person interviewed or their representative, or if it is evident that the interviewee has consented to the publication of an unauthorised interview.

It is the journalist's duty to accurately convey the words of others, whereby direct quotations must be reproduced verbatim, particularly in the case of interviews.

Where the deadline is short, it is acceptable to publish an unauthorised interview if both the interviewee and the in-

interviewer are clearly aware that the statements will be reproduced either verbatim or in audiovisual form.

If the text of an interview is reproduced in full or in part, the media outlet publishing it must identify the source and the author of the interview. When shortening an interview, a journalist should ensure that its coherence is preserved, paying particular attention not to remove parts that are necessary to maintain a balance with other views expressed in the interview.

Where the main content of someone's spoken views is paraphrased, the source must also be identified.

- b) Where an interview is preceded by a shortened report serving as an announcement or introduction, care must be taken to ensure that the announcement does not differ from the content of the programme or context being introduced.

In such cases, care must also be taken to protect the interviewee from falsehoods or anything else that could undermine their honour, dignity or legitimate interests.

2.3. Handling of Sources

A journalist should use as many sources as necessary to verify facts and ensure accurate information. The use of a single source is permitted only in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the editor, when, in accordance with the principle of accuracy, the reliability of the source and the value of the information are given particular consideration.

Every source must be clearly identified and, where necessary, references should be provided to demonstrate its relevance to the specific story.

When preparing a report, a journalist has an obligation to properly assess the positions and possible interests of their sources. A journalist should always bear in mind that there are sources whose sole purpose is to cause harm to the individuals or groups about whom the journalist is reporting. If a source belongs to an interest group or is connected to one in any way, this must be clearly indicated. A journalist must not accept conditions imposed by an information source regarding the publication or non-publication of certain information if such conditions undermine the foundations of ethical and professional journalism.

It is acceptable to use indirect sources provided that additional sources or other methods are used to verify facts.

- a) A journalist may use information obtained through social media, personal blogs or other online sources. When using information from social media, a journalist must clearly inform the public about its origin and the verification process.

In such cases, particular attention must be paid to the additional verification of facts, photographs and other materials, as well as to the verification of copyright, where applicable. If additional verification is not possible, a journalist must provide clear information about the sources used. Before using user-generated content from social media, a journalist should verify its source, authenticity and context. In order to confirm authenticity, a journalist should use available digital tools while applying journalistic due diligence. If a journalist remains uncertain as to whether content is authentic, that content must not be used. Misuse of content from social media is equivalent to the inaccurate citation of traditional sources.

- b) If a public statement contains information or allegations that may damage the reputation of third parties, and a journalist is unable to verify their accuracy, such allegations must be clearly identified and quoted as statements made by a named person.

2.4. Symbolic Images

- a) If an illustration, particularly a photograph, may give an average reader the impression that it is an authentic document, while it is in fact only a symbolic image, this must be clearly indicated.

Photomontages or other interventions in authentic documents must be clearly identified as such in the accompanying text or in another appropriate manner.

- b) If a media outlet uses reconstructed scenes in its reporting, this must be clear to the audience and must be explicitly indicated by voice-over or accompanying text.
- c) Archive material used on television must be clearly labelled as such, and audio inserts taken from radio archives must be identified as archival material by voice announcement.

2.5. Embargo

An embargo is a voluntary agreement between the person providing information and the media outlet.

The imposition of an embargo, whereby publication of information is delayed, is justified only when it is essential for objective and careful reporting in the public interest.

An embargo should only be respected when there is an objective justification for doing so, such as speeches that have yet to be

delivered, advance reports on business or other activities, or information about future events (meetings, decisions, ceremonial events, etc.).

Media outlets must not use embargoes to gain an advantage over competitors.

2.6. Results of Public Opinion Polls

When publishing the results of public opinion polls conducted by polling agencies, media outlets should indicate the number of respondents, the date when the survey was conducted, the identity of the entity that commissioned the survey, as well as the questions asked in the survey.

If no one commissioned the survey, media outlets should make clear that it was conducted independently by the agency.

In the case of daily, ad hoc surveys of citizens on controversial social issues, particular caution must be exercised when selecting questions, as well as in the objective presentation of results, in order to avoid possible manipulation.

When publishing such polls, it should be clearly indicated that their results do not necessarily represent a reliable or credible indicator of public opinion.

2.7. Letters from Readers/Listeners/Viewers

- a) Letters to the editor, insofar as they are appropriate in form and content, should serve to enable readers, listeners and viewers to express their opinions and thereby participate in the process of shaping public opinion.

Media outlets are not obliged to publish such letters.

- b) Media outlets have a duty, when publishing such letters, to ensure that their content does not in any way contradict the Code.
- c) If there is any doubt regarding the identity of the sender, the letter must not be published.

Only in exceptional cases, at the request of the author of the letter, may their name be omitted, with the note: "Name known to the editorial office."

Media outlets must not publish the authors' addresses or other personal data.

- d) Media outlets may establish their own rules regarding the possibility of shortening the content of letters, as well as other additional measures related to decisions on whether to publish a letter and how to protect the sender's privacy. Such rules must be clear, objective and known to readers, listeners and viewers.

2.8. Online Comments

Online media outlets should establish their own internal rules regarding comments made by third parties. These rules must respect the principles of necessity and proportionality. They must be clearly formulated, easily accessible and understandable to all users.

The rules should ensure that obviously unlawful content is not published, such as hate speech, promotion of terrorism, incitement to serious criminal offences, as well as the promotion of war crimes and crimes against humanity, in accordance with applicable legislation. Rules on comments may also aim to prevent the dissemination of content that encourages severe forms of intolerance or the use of derogatory expressions, as well as com-

ments and opinions intended to create an atmosphere of intimidation towards other users. In all cases, adequate safeguards must be introduced to avoid excessive restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.

Comments expressing opinions and contributing to debate on matters of public interest must be allowed, even if certain sections of the audience consider them shocking, scandalous or extreme.

Users should have access to simple and accessible mechanisms for reporting content that is clearly unlawful, as well as comments that violate internal rules.

Media outlets have the right to decide independently on their internal rules for comment moderation, enforcement mechanisms and sanctions. Media outlets are free to decide on matters such as mandatory registration, the use of automated filtering, reporting procedures and mechanisms, as well as different types of penalties and sanctions. Sanctions in the form of temporary or permanent bans should be reserved for cases of serious violations of internal rules or the publication of clearly unlawful content.

In disputes concerning the implementation of the rules referred to in the previous paragraph, a complaint shall be submitted to the Media Self-Regulatory Council or the relevant ombudsperson.

2.9. Medical Research and Treatments

- a) Reporting on alleged successes or failures of medical or pharmaceutical research in the fight against serious diseases requires particular caution and a responsible approach.

Neither the content nor the manner of presentation should create unjustified hope of imminent recovery among patients and their families when such hope is not supported by the actual state of medical research.

Conversely, critically framed or one-sided reports must not place seriously ill persons in a situation that increases their insecurity or further encourages doubts about the possible success of therapeutic measures.

- b) When reporting on the activities of self-proclaimed healers and practitioners of unproven medical practices, a journalist must demonstrate a particular degree of justified scepticism and restraint.
- c) When reporting on the spread of infectious and other diseases, a journalist must bear in mind that only the competent state authority is authorised to declare an epidemic.

Guidelines for Principle 3

A journalist has a duty to complete incomplete information and correct inaccurate information.

This particularly applies to information that may cause harm to someone.

Corrections must be appropriately highlighted. Any changes made in accordance with this principle must be clearly indicated.

3.1. Reply and Correction

- a) All media outlets must respect and ensure the exercise of the right of reply and correction, in accordance with the law, by publishing, promptly and free of charge, replies that refute, supplement or correct inaccurate, incomplete or incorrectly conveyed information, in order to avoid legal proceedings.
- b) Where individuals or legal entities believe that media content contains inaccurate information or unfounded criticism directed against them, they may request from the media outlet that published such content the opportunity to exercise the right of reply and to correct inaccurate statements.

A difference of opinion, in itself, is not sufficient grounds for exercising the right of reply, unless it is based on inaccurate facts.

Media outlets should respect this right where a report contains inaccurate information or unfounded criticism based on a misrepresentation of facts.

A correction or reply must not be longer than the text or report to which it relates.

All other criteria and procedures prescribed by law in this area must be respected.

3.2. Documentation

In all cases referred to in Guideline 3.1, media outlets are obliged to correct all inaccuracies in their archives, documentation and databases.

3.3. Right to Be Forgotten

Journalists and media outlets may, at the request of an individual, partially or fully remove media content, personal data or other information if its continued availability constitutes a significant and disproportionate interference with that person's privacy and reputation, particularly due to the passage of time and the loss of relevance. Such requests must not be accepted where there is an overriding public interest in retaining such data.

These provisions apply to online editions. Where media content, personal data or other information has been removed, the removal must be clearly indicated as having been made at the request of the person concerned.

Such removal must also apply to tags and other elements used by internal and external search engines for indexing purposes.

Guidelines for Principle 4

A journalist shall mention a person's race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, physical or mental condition or illness, as well as political affiliation, only when this is necessary to provide complete information in the public interest.

4.1. Hate Speech

- a) Media outlets must not publish content intended to incite hatred or hostility against persons on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, nationality, age, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental condition or illness, or political affiliation. Particular care must be taken to avoid any form of incitement to gender-based violence.

The same applies to the publication of content that directly or indirectly promotes such hostility and hatred, as well as any content aimed at creating a climate of intolerance and discrimination in society, particularly when directed at vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Journalists and media organisations should strive to promote tolerance, provide counter-narratives to hate speech, and eliminate harmful stereotypes.

- b) A journalist must take particular care not to contribute to the spread of ethnic hatred when reporting on events and statements related to these issues.

4.2. Reporting on Criminal Offences

When reporting on criminal offences, it is not permissible to refer to the religious, ethnic or other minority background of a suspect, unless such information may be relevant for the public's understanding of the event.

A journalist must bear in mind that referring to national, religious, ethnic or other minority identity may create and reinforce prejudices against minority groups.

Journalists must not, through their reporting, contribute to the creation and dissemination of negative stereotypes that may stigmatise local communities.

The term "terrorism" must not be associated with national, ethnic or religious characteristics.

4.3. Harm

Media outlets must act in good faith, even when expressing strong criticism or reporting on events or issues that polarise society.

Although journalistic freedom includes the possibility of resorting to a certain degree of exaggeration, a journalist must never publish unverified allegations against individuals or use derogatory expressions with the sole intention of harming their reputation.

Guidelines for Principle 5

When collecting information in any form, a journalist must use professionally ethical and legally permitted methods.

Any departure from this rule is permitted only where such methods are insufficient and where there is an overriding public interest in informing the public about a matter of exceptional importance.

5.1. Investigative Journalism

- a) Investigative journalism is an essential component of professional work and must be conducted with due diligence and responsibility.
- b) As a general rule, a journalist should use open methods of information gathering, clearly identifying themselves as a journalist.

A journalist must disclose their identity and inform sources and other involved parties about their work.

- c) The use of hidden cameras or other electronic means for covert investigations is acceptable only for the purpose of reporting on matters of significant public interest, when it is not possible to use other methods. The right to privacy must nevertheless be protected where the disclosure of the identity of certain persons is not justified by the public interest.

5.2. Reporting in Special Circumstances

Media reporting must be carried out with compassion and discretion in cases involving tragedies, where there is personal grief or shock, or where persons with physical or mental disabilities or

illnesses, as well as children and minors, are concerned.

A person's impaired ability to exercise judgment or the particular circumstances in which such persons find themselves must not be exploited for the purpose of obtaining information.

When reporting on an event, a journalist should not leave the scene until the event has concluded. If a journalist was not present at the event they are reporting on, this must be clearly indicated in the article or report.

5.3. Exclusive Information

The publication of exclusive information and stories is standard practice among journalists.

The practice of exclusive publication of information is not acceptable when it is linked to unfair competition practices or when it is used to restrict access to information of public interest.

5.4. Payment for Information

A journalist must not pay a source for information, unless there is a clearly demonstrable public interest in such information and provided that this does not affect the integrity and credibility of journalistic reporting.

Guidelines for Principle 6

It is the right and duty of a journalist to protect confidential sources of information, in accordance with applicable legislation.

- a) If a person agrees to provide information only on condition that their identity remains confidential, and the journalist accepts this condition, that obligation must be respected.

If a public authority, private entity or the editorial office of a media organisation exerts pressure on a journalist to disclose the identity of a source, the journalist should refuse such a request.

- b) A journalist must warn a source that their identity may be disclosed in cases provided for by law.
- c) Appropriate technical procedures (e.g. voice distortion or blurring of faces) may be used to broadcast a statement or interview with a source while protecting their anonymity.
- d) When contacting witnesses, whistleblowers or members of marginalised groups through social media, a journalist must exercise additional caution in order to protect sources.
- e) Documents marked as “classified” may be published if, following careful consideration, it is determined that the public’s right to know outweighs the reasons justifying confidentiality.

Guidelines for Principle 7

A journalist has a particular duty to respect the right to privacy.

The right to privacy is inversely proportional to the importance of the public function performed by an individual; however, even in such cases, human dignity must be respected.

- a) A journalist must not intrude into a person's private life or report on it without their consent.

Disclosure of certain aspects of private life is permitted only to the extent necessary for reporting on matters of public interest in an appropriate and accurate manner.

Every person has the right to dignity, which a journalist must not arbitrarily undermine in the name of the public's right to be informed. This is particularly important in cases involving persons who have unwillingly become participants in events of public interest (disasters, accidents, different conflicts, etc.).

- b) Reporting on a person's private life may be justified where it is in the public interest and where the public's right to know outweighs the individual interest in preserving the privacy of certain aspects of that person's life.

When reporting on aspects of privacy that are of particular public interest, a journalist must not violate ethical standards by resorting to sensationalism, inappropriate curiosity, voyeurism, ridicule or the undermining of dignity.

The publication of private information may also be justified where it prevents the public from being misled (e.g. when a person engages in private conduct that they publicly condemn).

A journalist may publish a photograph or recording identifying a person's face and/or voice without seeking consent if the person, phenomenon or event is of public interest, particularly where it concerns a holder of public office.

- c) Where an intrusion into privacy is justified or unavoidable, reporting should be limited to those details that are essential to the public's understanding, thereby minimising any potential harm to a person's dignity and reputation.

A journalist may use security camera footage or other authentic video and audio recordings concerning aspects of a person's private life that are in the public interest. This is permissible provided that it is the only way for the public to verify the accuracy of the reported information, particularly where the person concerned disputes the media's allegations.

- d) A person's personal data, such as a private address, telephone number, unique identification number and identity document numbers, are subject to special protection and must not be published.
- e) Victims of accidents or crimes have the right to special protection of their identity. Disclosure of a victim's identity is not always necessary for the public to better understand an accident or crime.

Exceptions may be tolerated where the person concerned is a public figure or in cases involving specific circumstances. Such circumstances may include the need to prevent rumours and speculation about the identity of accident victims.

Before publishing the name of a victim or victims of violence or an accident, a journalist must verify whether their

immediate family has been informed. Before publishing photographs or recordings from the scene of an accident or act of violence, a journalist should carefully assess whether there is a public interest in revealing the identity of victims or displaying disturbing images (bodies, pools of blood, injuries, fractures, etc.).

The publication of disturbing images may be justified only with the aim of drawing attention to the consequences of particularly serious forms of socially unacceptable conduct.

- f) When it comes to family members and other persons who are indirectly affected by an accident, or who have no connection to a crime or accident, particular care must be taken when publishing their names, photographs and recordings.
- g) A person's physical or mental condition or illness, as well as injuries, fall within the sphere of privacy.

Out of respect for such persons and their family members, media outlets should not publish their names, photographs or recordings unless this is directly related to the report.

- h) Reporting on suicides requires exceptional care and restraint.

In such cases, names and detailed descriptions of the circumstances in which the suicide occurred should not be published.

The protection of the privacy, dignity and interests of a person who has died by suicide, as well as of persons close to them, should be the primary consideration when reporting on individual cases.

Exceptions are justified only where there is an exceptional public interest.

- i) Reporting on people who are dying or suffering physically or mentally may be published only when it concerns matters of public interest and must not be used for sensationalist purposes.
- j) When reporting on accidents and natural disasters, the suffering of victims and the feelings of their families must be respected.

Victims of accidents and their family members must not be placed in a situation where they are subjected to further suffering through the publication of details of the accident in the media.

- k) All guidelines relating to the right to privacy also apply, wherever possible, in cases involving deceased persons.

Guidelines for Principle 8

A journalist is obliged to protect the integrity and rights of children and minors.

8.1. The Interests of Children

- a) Media outlets are obliged to respect and promote the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to exercise particular care when investigating information that affects the interests of children. No child shall be subjected to media interference in their private and family life, home or personal correspondence, or to attacks on their honour and reputation.
- b) The dignity and rights of children must be respected in all circumstances.
- c) It is impermissible to publish the identity, photographs, recordings or statements of children and minors without the prior consent of their parents/guardians, particularly where they have suffered or committed an act of violence and/or a criminal offence.
- d) Journalists and media outlets are obliged to protect and promote children's right to freedom of expression and freedom of information by seeking their opinions and statements on matters affecting them, as well as by taking into account their interests and needs when creating and publishing media and journalistic content. When determining what is in the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into consideration must be respected, in accordance with their age and maturity.

It is impermissible to publish photographs and recordings of child victims of violence, or to disclose their identity.

- e) Media outlets are obliged to exercise particular care when reporting on minors suspected of involvement in unlawful activities, respecting the principle of the presumption of innocence and avoiding sensationalism.

It is impermissible to publish photographs and recordings of minors suspected of committing criminal offences, or to disclose their identity.

- f) Any media exploitation of children that exposes them to humiliation due to any form of suffering, such as poverty or unacceptable behaviour and actions by adults, is impermissible.
- g) When publishing information sourced from a minor, a journalist should obtain permission from the minor's parent or guardian.

When reporting on violence involving children and minors in any capacity (as witnesses, victims or perpetrators), statements should not be obtained from children or minors, even where parental consent has been obtained, as this may harm the child's best interests in the long term.

- h) It is the duty of a journalist to protect the best interests of every child above all other considerations, including by advocating for and promoting children's rights.

Guidelines for Principle 9

When reporting on investigative actions and court proceedings, a journalist must not prejudge the outcome of judicial proceedings. However, a journalist has the duty and responsibility to report on different facts and circumstances related to a particular case.

9.1. Reporting on Criminal Offences, Investigations and Court Proceedings

- a) Reports on investigations and court cases serve to accurately inform the public about criminal offences, their investigation, defence arguments and court judgments.

A journalist is obliged to respect the principle of the presumption of innocence, according to which everyone shall be considered innocent until proven guilty by a final court decision, even in cases where they have admitted guilt. This also applies in situations where guilt may appear obvious in the eyes of the public. Nevertheless, a journalist has the duty and responsibility to report on different facts and circumstances related to a particular case, regardless of the views and conclusions of law enforcement authorities, the prosecution or the court.

A journalist should strive to use legal concepts and terminology as accurately as possible. When reporting on criminal offences, investigations and trials, journalists must use clear and precise legal terminology in order to avoid serious errors and confusion between legal concepts.

- b) Unnecessary and biased portrayals of individuals, as well as the publication of unfounded allegations, constitute a

violation of the constitutional principle of the protection of human dignity, which applies without exception also to perpetrators of criminal offences.

The purpose of court reporting must not be to impose public punishment on convicted persons through the media, nor to turn the media into a tool of public humiliation.

Journalists and media outlets are obliged to respect the presumption of innocence by exercising particular care and caution when publishing photographs and video recordings of suspects taken during arrests and detentions, where such images create a perception of guilt and thereby contribute to stigmatisation and degrading treatment before a final court judgment.

Journalists and media organisations must not justify, encourage or endorse criminal offences. They should also avoid expressing empathy towards perpetrators of criminal offences or supporting their views and motives, particularly in cases involving war crimes and crimes against humanity.

- c) If a media outlet has begun reporting on a criminal case, it is obliged to continue monitoring and reporting on the further course of proceedings.

If a media outlet has reported on an accused person who has been named or is recognisable to the wider public, it is obliged to also publish information about any acquittal, a substantial reduction in charges or discontinuation of an investigation.

Criticism and commentary related to a court case must be clearly separated from reporting on the judicial proceedings. A journalist has the right to express critical opinions

on court decisions, but media outlets must carefully avoid unfair and unnecessary criticism suggesting that judges are motivated by improper interests in their work, although such criticism does not necessarily constitute contempt of court.

- d) Media outlets must not disclose the identity of victims of gender-based or sexual violence, nor publish content or information that may lead to their identification, unless the victim has given consent or such disclosure is permitted by law. As a rule, the identification of family members or persons close to individuals accused or convicted of criminal offences should also be avoided. When reporting on cases of sexual and/or domestic violence, journalists must exercise particular care to ensure that published content does not contribute to the revictimization of persons who have experienced violence.

Identification of persons may be permitted only where it is necessary for complete, fair and accurate reporting on a criminal offence or judicial proceeding.

Perpetrators of sexual offences must not be identified where this could lead to the disclosure of the identity of victims or survivors.

- e) When reporting on investigations and court proceedings involving minors, media outlets must act with particular care, taking into account the future of those persons. This also applies to children and minors who are victims of crimes.

9.2. Reporting on Violence

When reporting on actual or threatened violence, media outlets should carefully balance the public interest in information with the interests of victims and other persons involved.

In such cases, particular efforts must be made to ensure impartial reporting, and media outlets must not allow themselves to be used as a tool by perpetrators of criminal offences.

Media outlets must not independently undertake attempts to mediate between the police and perpetrators of criminal offences.

Interviews with perpetrators of violent acts are not permitted, except in exceptional cases where this is necessary to serve an overriding public interest.

9.3. Coordination with Competent Authorities, “Media Silence”

As a principle, media outlets do not accept the imposition of “media silence”.

Coordination between media outlets and the police is possible only in cases where a journalist, through their action or inaction, may help protect or save the life and health of a victim or other persons involved. At the request of the police, media outlets may introduce partial or complete restrictions on reporting for a certain period of time in order to resolve criminal acts, provided that such a request is justified and properly explained.

Guidelines for Principle 10

A journalist must not seek or accept privileges of any kind that could compromise or cast doubt on their independence and impartiality, or undermine editorial freedom.

10.1. Professional Independence

A journalist must not have public, private or political interests (in the form of employment, management positions, holding office, ownership or other forms of interest) that affect or could affect their professional independence and ethical conduct. Appropriate measures must be taken to effectively prevent and address conflicts of interest.

If a journalist or editor performs other functions in addition to journalistic work, those functions must be strictly separated.

A journalist must not conceal or alter information that the public has the right to know due to pressure or influence from advertisers or other persons with corporate, political or advocacy interests in the media organisation, including media owners.

A journalist must not accept, or create the impression of accepting, invitations and gifts that go beyond the usual level of social interaction and what is necessary for carrying out professional work.

In particular, a journalist must not accept financial payments, reimbursement of expenses, discounts, donations, free travel, holidays, business travel, gifts or any other benefits that could harm their professional credibility, as well as the reputation of the media outlet for which they work.

As a general principle, journalists, editors and other media employees must not accept any benefits, preferential treatment or other privileges from third parties that could compromise their independence and professionalism.

10.2. Distinction Between News Content and Advertising

Advertisements, promotional content, sponsored content, marketing messages and other similar forms of communication must be clearly and unequivocally distinguished from editorial content.

Such content must be created and presented in a manner that enables readers, listeners or viewers to recognise it as such.

A journalist must not participate in advertising or any form of promotional activity.

10.3. Public Relations Materials

The credibility of media outlets as sources of information requires particular care in handling public relations and advertising materials, including such materials appearing on social media.

Articles, photographs, video recordings, audio recordings, radio reports or programmes relating to business entities, their products, services or events associated with them must remain within the limits justified by professional standards. Such content must be prepared and published in accordance with the public interest arising from the information itself.

This also applies to advertising texts, photographs, recordings, radio features and illustrations that have not undergone editorial processing.

10.4. Transparency of Media Interests

All media outlets must ensure transparency of their ownership structures and economic interests.

Guidelines for Principle 11

A journalist has an obligation to show solidarity with colleagues to the extent that this does not prevent them from properly performing their professional duties, or put them at risk of violating the fundamental principles of the Code.

11.1. Solidarity

Journalists should show solidarity and protect each other's rights, regardless of differences in political or other views.

These Guidelines may be further developed in accordance with the ethical dilemmas encountered in practice.

Media owners and editors-in-chief are obliged to ensure that journalists and editors within their media organisations are familiar with the content of the Code.

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