

ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN DIGITAL PRACTICE

Riitta Haapakoski
Seppo Hurme

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INTRODUCTION

There are very few community radio stations in Finland. Each radio station is going through its own struggle for survival; persisting for 15 years is already an achievement in itself. Despite its many years in existence, the community radio is still only in its beginnings. One reason for this is that the NGOs have not joined into the community radio activity as eagerly as one might have imagined.

Community radio aims to increase its social power in the same way other media do. The aim is not only to activate the NGOs in the programme production, but also to increase their participation in the maintenance of the community radio in general.

Community radio takes shape and evolves together with the individuals and groups in it. In an ideal situation, the dialogue between the community radio and its target group is a meeting of mutual interests. It is in the interest of a community radio to train individuals who are committed to community radio and who are capable of keeping the group's publishing activity going. The group finds these motivated individuals through the community radio.

Why does a group remain silent although there is a medium available for their use? The motivation for taking up publishing activity does not only spring from their critical reflection on the mainstream media, but primarily from the group's own critical self-reflection. This implicates that the NGOs be made more conscious of the social power of the media in general and especially of the possibilities of social influence relevant to the group that are offered by the community radio.

An awareness of the existence of community radio and of the groups' own potential can not be created in two training days. The learning process is long and is furthered only through practical radio activity. Therefore, the community radio training should focus from the outset on practical work and encourage the trainee to learn by doing.

It is important for the community radio trainer to make the target group function in the best possible way to benefit the common interests. Therefore it is recommended that the trainer get to know the personal strengths of each trainee and aim to direct the individuals to suitable tasks within the programme production.

Frequently, personal factors inhibit participation in community radio training, for example low self-esteem, the underestimation of abilities and skills, passivity and short-sightedness brought on by difficult periods, a lifetime of being taught to keep quiet etc. In community radio training, it is therefore very important to stress that media skills are available to all and to encourage the trainees to show themselves what they are capable of in practical radio work.

The target group of this handbook are community radio trainers struggling with such practical questions, e.g. how to motivate trainees. The agenda here is not to form a detailed teaching schedule, but to draw up some schemes about how to motivate the trainees to contribute to community radio activity and about the use of a new tool, digital technology.

One of the aims of this handbook is to reduce the mystique surrounding digital technology. Here, the community radio trainer should rely on simple common sense. Not everybody has to learn computer editing to be able to participate in programme making. There are other ways, for example the portable and desk-model mini-disc recorders, quite similar to home equipment and easier to learn to use.

The handbook is in many aspects based on work that was started during the training project *Creating Community Voices*, predecessor to *Digital Dialogues*. During the project, the tandem training principle was tested at Radio Robin Hood. The aim was to promote the participation of target groups in community radio activity by co-operation between the radio trainer and the target group trainer. This dialogue has also been the guiding line in this handbook.

1 THE ESSENTIAL CONTENT OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook presents a training package for community radio trainers. The target group of the training are people active in NGOs who do not have previous experience in radio work. The handbook consists of two training modules.

The first module creates guidelines for training aimed at increasing the trainees' motivation to produce their own publicity and at developing their critical stance toward media in general. The other training module deals with the teaching of digital technology.

The training modules aim above all to answer the question of how the trainees can be engaged in radio work over a longer period of time. The training days merely function as a signpost to the practice of radio work, during which things are learned continually and knowledge is deepened where necessary. The training does not involve an in-depth presentation of the basics of radio programme making. It is sufficient that the trainees learn to recognise their own themes and the forms of presentation that suit them. Thus, the training includes an approach to producing one's own publicity as a normal part of the group's organizational activity.

The training modules are designed in such a way that, with minor alterations, they can be run outside the radio station in the groups' own surrounding. Therefore, for example, the use of a studio mixer is not dwelled on. It is more important to encourage the trainees to do field work –

reporting and directly commenting about their own reality, on the spot. For this purpose, the easy-to-learn handling of portable mini-disc recorders (a good example of how digital technology is often hidden in familiar guises) is sufficient.

The trainees who have some experience with computers (through their work, for instance) usually benefit the most from learning digital editing. The training should also be directed toward everyday life: how the trainees can produce radio programmes at home, for example.

Learning digital editing is difficult without basic knowledge about computers. It is nonetheless important that all trainees get a general idea of how reality can be altered with the help of digital technique, purposefully or unwittingly, to suit the interests of the programme maker.

Training module 1:

- the distinguishing features of community and mainstream media
- NGO publicity
- the group's own themes and forms of presentation
- the ethics of journalism

Training module 2:

- the distinguishing features of the digital boom
- the portable mini-disc recorder and microphone
- editing with computer software

2 GOALS OF THE TRAINING

During the *Creating Community Voices* training project that preceded *Digital Dialogues*, it was asked why the workers in the metal industry do not take part in the community radio activities. These were some of the answers:

- Union workers aren't motivated to produce their own publicity.
- Who is allowed to speak on the behalf of the organisation?
- Workers are afraid of becoming responsible for information leaks.
- The importance of their own points of view and themes is underestimated.
- The imitation of the mainstream media presentation and content.

It is clear that the answers to all these questions cannot come from inside the community radio. The community radio trainers do not have any patent solution for training of all groups.

Being aware of the problems involved in the participation of different groups may, however, help the trainer to avoid fighting against windmills: if the group is not motivated to seek its own publicity in the first place, why should it be motivated to do community radio work? It is important to be able to deal with these internal questions during training.

The goals of the training are to be investigated from two different angles. Motivating the trainees to be active in community radio cannot be the only aim – it is as important to motivate the group to regard seeking its own publicity as a normal part of NGO activity. If there is no interest in publicity, there cannot be a motivation for producing their own media reality.

The aims for increasing the trainees' self-confidence and consciousness of their own strengths are connected to both NGO and community radio practice: a common activity, where individuals evaluate themselves and become aware of their own responsibilities.

The training should not aim at offering standard solutions, but rather at opening possibilities for trainees' own creative work. An essential goal of the training is to raise the trainees' critical awareness and their ability to evaluate the options it presents them with.

The publicity of an NGO is not the monolithic publicity of the organisation but the publicity of the individuals functioning in it. The community radio does not, like the mainstream media, function through pre-determined and set programme content or presentation formats. The trainees have to find these by themselves.

The trainer's function is to initiate discussion and make the mystifications involving both mainstream media and NGO publicity apparent. Is it really so that a mainstream reporter is, from the beginning, somehow better and more skilful than a grass roots commentator?

The aim of the training is to make the trainees question the existing reality of the media industry. Does the mainstream reporter neglect the subjects important to a group because the audience is not interested, or simply because he or she doesn't have the possibility to present them? Can the reasons be found in lack of expertise, special formats, or media owners' interests?

One should, in the same vein, consider the preconceptions about who is allowed to speak for the organization and in what forum. Is some part of the group excluded from public presentation because its points of view are considered less important?

One of the goals of the training should be to eliminate the trainees' fear of legal consequences of publicity and to help them handle matters of the working community in the public forum without the risk of getting fired. Being aware of media legislation is not enough, although getting to know the ethics of journalism often prevents individuals from going too far.

3 TRAINEES

The training outlined in this handbook is directed to NGOs. The participants are approached as a group in which:

1. all individuals are equal
2. individuals are committed to the group's mutual tasks and goals
3. individuals complement one another's skills and abilities
4. individuals have group-oriented and task-orientated roles
5. individuals have the ability to express their opinions and make common decisions
6. individuals share similar backgrounds and/or values

4 ACTIVITIES

FIRST MODULE: ELEMENTARY SKILLS

4.1 COMMUNITY RADIO AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA

GOAL:

The trainees learn to define the characteristics of community radio and mainstream media.

ACTIVITIES:

The community radio trainer's presentation about community radio. A group discussion about mainstream media.

MATERIAL:

Visual material about community radio. Samples of programmes from Radio Robin Hood.

DURATION:

60 minutes

ABOUT THE REALIZATION :

A community radio trainer often forgets that the majority of the trainees are at a radio station for the first time. To dissipate the fears this may cause, tell some short “heroic” stories about the origins and development of the radio station. Such stories help the trainees to understand the nature of community radio organisations and their goals, and to introduce them into the community. The NGO-people often know one another across organisational boundaries. The recognition of this increases the feeling of community: “Oh, he/she has also been here!”

The introduction to community radio can be started by relating that it said to have started in Latin America when people began ‘broadcasting’ programmes into their immediate surroundings with loudspeakers. Theoretical discussions about freedom of speech should be avoided. It is important to form a picture of community radio as a part of people’s everyday lives. Visual material is helpful for the presentation.

Exercise 1

Show the trainees visual material on community radio.

What possible groups are to be found in the picture?

What could be the motivation for working with a community radio?

Hint!

Stress personal motives.

The goal of a group discussion is to encourage the trainees to evaluate the mainstream media from a critical point of view. Do the trainees have any real possibility of having their voice heard in the mainstream media, which (commercial media) aim at maximizing profit or which (national public broadcasting) have the dominant majority as their target group to begin with?

To get the conversation going, an exercise such as the following may be used:

Exercise 2

Let the trainees listen to Radio Robin Hood’s programme ads.

What do the programmes talk about?

Do the mainstream media talk about the same things? How? If not, why not?

It is important that the trainer have some advance information about the group because this makes it easier to discuss particular distinguishing features of the mainstream media that can be critically examined from the trainee’s own point of view. A recommended starting point here is e.g. to discuss under what conditions a reporter works in the mainstream media.

Everyone knows that work is always done under the conditions of the employer. This is the case in the media too. How do the owner's economical and political interests become visible in the work of a journalist, for example with regard to the topics chosen and the viewpoints presented? Is a superficial approach to certain topics due to the hectic nature of a journalist's work? Or is the aim rather to sell more stories than the competing company? These are examples of questions that may help the trainer to advance the discussion further.

4.2 PUBLICITY AS A NORMAL PART OF A TARGET GROUP'S ACTIVITIES

GOAL:

Trainees learn to analyse and question the existing publicity work of their own organisation.

ACTIVITY:

Group discussion about problems and benefits of producing their own publicity.

MATERIAL:

Articles illustrating the way mainstream media have handled issues connected to trade union.

DURATION:

60 minutes

ABOUT THE REALIZATION:

The target group trainer forms a link between the community radio trainer and the group. This is a person well informed about the background of the trainees, about individual abilities and interests. With all of his/her experience of NGO reality, the target group trainer acts as a gateway to the organisation's main goals and activities. The information about the target group and about the organisation in general is important to the community radio trainer, who has to adjust to working with very different NGOs in the way most successful for each of them.

In order to promote the group's participation in producing its own publicity by using community radio as tool, it is vital that the target group trainer be able to become involved in the implementation of the training project. Most likely, the target group trainer will eagerly welcome this offer. However, there may be other factors involved which, probably unconsciously, inhibit him or her from truly believing in the future success of this project.

The background for this mistrust may lie in long experience of taking responsibility for an NGO's existing (usually printed) information service. Producing publicity is always connected with certain rules and deadlines. This fact isn't easily compatible with the unpredictable nature of volunteer work – you can never be absolutely sure about receiving the planned contributions (e.g. articles for an organisation leaflet) on time when dealing with NGO activists, who are usually working on a voluntary basis.

In terms of establishing on-going programme production by a group, the target group trainer may simply envision additional work: chasing after trainees, reminding them of deadlines coming up, asking for missing contributions, filling in (or correcting) half-done contributions or, in the end – hurriedly doing all the work by him/herself. No wonder that, initially, the idea of future radio activities for the group may be regarded with caution by the target group trainer, who is already overburdened with maintaining the existing publicity work of the organisation.

The community radio trainer should reassure the target group trainer that all practical issues concerning the group's participation in community radio will be dealt with within the radio station. It is not going to end up with the target group trainer also taking responsibility for the group's radio activities, that is, beginning to produce radio programmes. These problems associated with NGO reality should be discussed during the radio course while the target group trainer is present.

During the radio course, the community radio trainer's function is to initiate group discussion among the target group trainer and the trainees about the current situation of the group's publicity work. This task depends on co-operative work between the community radio trainer and the target group trainer. It is recommended that they lay the groundwork for possible topics of discussion beforehand. These were some of the topics which were regarded as suitable for a discussion with a group from the metalworkers' union.

1. producing publicity as a part of the organisation's normal (everyday) activities
2. publicity as a way of exercising power (e.g. employers versus employees)
3. one's own publicity, group publicity as our publicity (publicity of individuals acting in NGO, not monolithic NGO publicity)
4. informing about conflicts in the workplace

The aim is to provoke the trainees to question their own organisational reality, especially the current situation of their publicity work. The metalworkers' union is an interest group which should be able to articulate these interests. As in personal life, you have to learn to communicate in your own interest, no one else is going to do it for you. If metalworkers remain silent, it is their employer's voice which will be heard. Among the group members, are there tensions or conflicts which inhibit publicity work? Who benefits if they remain silent?

A very important function of the target group trainer is to inform the trainees about legislation concerning the confidentiality of internal affairs at the working place. It is essential to stress that there are legitimate journalistic techniques that help to overcome such barriers.

Understandably, a person inexperienced at giving speeches or writing press releases may feel hesitant about getting into the 'front lines' of debate. It can be very re-assuring to realize that, in radio work, this need not be the case at all times. A person hosting a radio show can provide background information and invite an NGO functionary as a studio guest (or for a telephone interview) to discuss questions of political significance.

Also, the significance of controversial issues for people's individual lives can be made more clear through feature elements on the radio – interviews with normal employees or residents of a particular area, stories told in an informal context, personal impressions and reminiscences. These can highlight social and political developments by giving them the perspective of individual experience. When trainees become familiar with different forms of presentation on the radio, they may feel more free to cover all kinds of topics.

4.3 PRODUCING MATERIAL FOR BROADCAST

GOAL:

Trainees learn to identify the commercial radio format. They bring up their own themes and forms of expression suitable for them. Introduction to good journalistic practice.

ACTIVITY:

Group discussion on programme flow in the commercial media. Exercises.

MATERIAL:

Audio samples of commercial programme flow. Guidelines for good journalistic practice.

DURATION:

120 minutes

ABOUT THE REALISATION:

Many newcomers to community radio journalism unintentionally imitate the programme formats of the commercial media. Following these uncritically often leads to an experience of failure – the will to really say something can easily die out if one doesn't find suitable modes of expression.

The aim of the group discussion is to question the commercial format and open new viewpoints for the group to recognise forms of expression which suit their own themes. Audio samples of commercial programme flow are a good introduction for the discussion.

Samples may include parts of programmes whose listeners call in to the show, news, commentary, interviews etc. It is also recommendable to include a sample that captures the fast-tempo mix with its never-ending flow of music, commercials and brief talk sequences.

The trainer can lead the discussion by asking the trainees how they would handle questions like unemployment or work conflicts in programmes similar to the samples. The trainer's job is to point out problems that are likely to arise.

Exercise 1

Make a list of themes on which you would like to produce a radio programme.

Which elements would you use to put together the programme?

The group discussion has probably given the trainees an idea of the restrictive factors that commercial radio programmes are subject to when it comes to shedding light on a particular topic. At this point the trainer should give a short introduction to different forms of presentation (reports, interviews, discussions, radio columns, feature stories etc.). The main goal of this exercise, however, is to encourage the trainees to identify the forms of expression most suitable for themselves.

At this point the trainer already knows a little about individual tendencies and interests of the group members. A good speech writer could be gently encouraged to edit speeches and essays for the group's future broadcasting activities. The wit and the poet of the group could be encouraged to contribute by making sketches and audio 'pictures'.

When guiding the planning of a radio programme, it is best simply to emphasize the aim of the editors involved: selecting the elements and their sequence all boils down to what they want to say with the programme. We all have experience in everyday narrative situations, in explaining something to someone. These dramaturgical skills are also useful in forming a radio programme.

Awareness of skills they already have gives many trainees more self-confidence and encourages them to use their own imagination instead of learning basics only by analysing existing radio programmes.

Exercise 2

Read "Guidelines for good journalistic practice". What does it say about journalistic responsibilities?

This exercise is meant to answer the question trainees and voluntary journalists often ask: what are we allowed to say on the radio? “Guidelines for good journalistic practice” is a directive for journalistic self-regulation confirmed by the Union of Journalists in Finland. Radio broadcasting is always public. What is said in the privacy of one’s own back yard might lead to legal consequences if said on the radio.

It is important that the trainees get a clear picture of good journalistic posture. Otherwise they might experience insecurities that sometimes lead to severe self-censorship. It is also important to emphasise, once again, that it’s good to observe the practices of the mainstream media critically. One often finds that mainstream journalism violates the codes of journalistic ethics.

SECOND MODULE: DIGITAL SKILLS

4.4 THE USE OF PORTABLE MINI-DISC RECORDERS

GOAL:

Taking stock of the digital “boom”. The trainees learn to use a microphone and to record and edit sound material.

ACTIVITY:

Trainer’s presentation on digital technique. Exercises.

MATERIAL:

A portable mini-disc recorder and a microphone.

DURATION:

60 minutes

ABOUT THE REALIZATION:

It is usually difficult for people to keep up with ongoing technological progress. The reason for this is, for example, the fact that the manufacturers need to increase their sales by producing new technology that replaces the old. Different “booms” and “hypes” make the consumer feel a compulsive urge to buy next-generation equipment.

This digital “flush” receives a great deal of positive feedback in the media – visible in countless advertisements and in programme time devoted to informing the public about new options presented by digital technology. These possibilities have more to do with the quantitative and

qualitative improvements of the delivery technique. The content is usually forgotten in the discussion.

Digital technology has become a value in itself, and it is no wonder that the word "digital" frightens the trainees. To avoid this, the trainer should introduce the background of digital technology and present it as tool that has been awaited in radio stations for a long time.

Digital technology is becoming an everyday routine in the programme production of community radio stations. The equipment is getting more and more readily available to the common consumer. Many of the trainees may have digital equipment at home. One does not have to go to a big institution-like studio to record a radio programme. It is possible to record or at least to prepare a radio programme at home, and even to build a home radio station if one gets hold of a small radio transmitter.

A quick glance over the stacks of components, cables, and blinking lights in the studio may be an overwhelming experience for some trainees. Some may fear they will break the delicate devices just by touching them. It is important that the trainer emphasize that the majority of the devices in the studio are just ordinary consumer electronics equipment.

Exercise 1

Hand a portable mini-disc recorder to the trainees and ask them to try to recognize familiar buttons on it.

It is very likely that some functions like "play", "stop" and "record" are recognized as the same as on a tape recorder or a CD-player. Encourage the trainees not to underestimate their own skills and knowledge. The use of a mini-disc recorder, like using computer programmes, always seem difficult to learn. This does not necessarily have to do with the user but, more often, with the design of the equipment or software that has not taken an average user into consideration.

Exercise 2

The trainees interview one another. After this, everybody will listen to the results and evaluate the technical quality of the recording together.

Were the voices of the interviewer and the interviewed at equal volume?

Did the distance between the microphone and the sound source seem right?

Were there sounds audible that came from handling the microphone?

Could one hear other sounds in the background that interfered with the interview?

It is possible to illustrate what editing means with the help of numbered pieces of paper. Each piece of paper signifies a separate part of the recording. An easy way to delete a part of the recording is to throw away a piece of paper. The remaining pieces are re-numbered. This demonstrates how the ordinal numbers of the tracks change during editing.

Another slightly more difficult deleting operation is to remove the end or beginning of a track. In the illustration, a part of the paper is torn off and thrown away, and the papers are re-numbered again.

The third deleting operation is done by removing a section from the middle of a track. In this case a piece of paper is divided in three, torn apart and the middle part thrown away. After that the papers will be re-numbered again.

4.5 DIGITAL EDITING WITH COMPUTER SOFTWARE

GOAL:

Trainees will learn to use software to edit audio material.

ACTIVITY:

Trainer's presentation of audio editing software. Exercises.

MATERIAL:

Computer with audio editing software

Minimum requirements:

Computer

- Preferably equipped with Microsoft Windows, which is probably the most familiar operating system among trainees.
- Minimum CPU speed 166 MHz.
- Minimum free hard disk work space 300MB per trainee, which should be enough for editing a 10 minute exercise.

Software

- SoundForge, CoolEdit, WaveLab, GoldWave or similar software that has at least the basic editing functions.
- User interface should be in trainees' native language, because foreign terms in the software are hard to adopt in a short time period.

DURATION:

120 minutes

ABOUT THE REALIZATION:

A slow computer, poorly working operating system and/or editing software can easily lower the trainees' motivation. The operating system should be updated regularly. It should also be intact and well maintained to provide the best possible platform for running editing software. There is no

100% error-free software, so it is vital to also update the editing software to the latest available version in order to reduce the possibility of software “bugs”.

In this part of the training the emphasis is placed only on basic audio editing functions. More advanced functions like frequency balancing, applying audio effects and multi-track editing are left out of the training. The objective is to create the necessary basic abilities to edit a radio programme.

Tell the trainees that it takes time to learn the functions of the editing software and that it also requires a lot of independent training. Inform them about the times the trainees can later come to the radio station to practice editing with the guidance of the trainer.

Demonstration 1

Tell the trainees that the sound can be seen on the computer monitor and that they can learn to read it. With a little experience, it takes no time to visually grasp the volume changes and get the impression of what kind of audio material there is in each part of the audio file.

- At first the trainees will be shown low-volume audio material in the waveform display. Trainees will be asked to describe what they see. How can it be determined that the volume of the sound is too low?
- In the next view there is speech and music. Trainees will be asked to describe how speech and music parts are different from one another. Why does the speech part appear more fragmented than the music part?
- In the third view there are a low-frequency tone and a high-frequency tone alongside one another. Trainees will be asked to determine which one is which.

Exercise 1

Handling audio files

Trainees will practice opening and saving audio files. In this exercise, attention is paid to the format of the audio file. Complicated compressed formats (MPEG, Ogg Vorbis, etc ...) are ignored. The focus is kept on the standard 16-bit PCM format, which is fast to use and does not lose audio quality on multiple save operations.

Exercise 2

Editing the radio programme.

Trainees will import the exercise they had done with portable mini-disc recorders into the computer and practice the basic cutting/editing functions, such as deleting or re-positioning parts of audio takes. At the same time they will get the grasp of how to “move” inside the audio file and learn how to zoom the view to the appropriate size.

Exercise 3

Controlling the volume balance.

Trainees will practice the manual volume balancing by raising the volume of the low volume parts of their audio take. In addition, they will practice the automatic volume balancing functions (sound compression) of the editing software.

5 DIDACTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS

Community radio training often starts with the assumption that groups coming to a radio station are “ready and eager” for commitment to community radio activities, and that they are just looking for the media skills needed to begin broadcasting activities with their group. The function of a community radio trainer has been to define the know-how that gives the group the basis to work as independently as possible at the radio station.

This ‘banking education’ approach to community radio training, in which trainees receive and store up the information given by the trainer and do nothing much on their own to influence the learning process, has its background in the limited staff resources of most stations. Due to that, the aim has been to minimise the working hours spent on assisting a group. That approach has often meant as much ready-made knowledge for the trainees as possible, especially if the trainer in question has a long working history in the community radio and through experience has a good hunch about all the possible mishaps the group’s radio activities might involve.

In reality, training aimed at preventing problematic situations has not decreased the need for continuous training. Quite the contrary, this approach has made the trainees passive by emphasizing formal skills at the expense of goal-directed activities.

It is clear that continuous training is also required after courses, when the trainees move on to practical work. In this handbook, community radio training is approached as a continuous project that has its roots in the developing critical awareness of the trainees. Defining their own goals and initiating activities that match those goals are based on that awareness.

Citizens' groups learning journalistic and technical skills don't change the mainstream media. Therefore the goal has to be to form a group's own media reality. Challenges await a community radio trainer: she/he has to be able to take a leap into the unknown, to be a part of learning process that doesn't lead to results as predictable as with older teaching methods that approach the trainees more as a receiving, passive party.

This handbook is a result of trying to create guidelines for radio training based on a dialogue of the trainer and the trainees. The first module describes the learning processes applying the three-stage investigation method of Paulo Freire: naming – reflection – action. The aim is to encourage the trainees to question mass media reality and define their own programme elements and forms of expression suitable for them.

The second module places its emphasis on learning face to face and learning by doing. At the same time, the aim is to encourage the trainees to question digital reality. Seeing digital technique as a tool, not as an inherent value or an end in itself, encourages the trainees to get to know even those functions of the equipment that demand more learning effort.

Guidelines for good journalistic practice

Introduction

The basis of good journalistic practice is a citizen's right to correct and essential information by which he can form a realistic picture of the world and society around him.

The professional ethics of a journalist involves the respecting of basic human values, like human rights, democracy, peace and international understanding.

A journalist must recognize his responsibility for the environment and be aware of the environmental effects related to the questions he deals with.

Good journalistic practice does not limit either the journalist's own or the public's freedom of expression. It aims at promoting discussion and information flow, and involves responsibility for the principles and policies of communication.

The guidelines for journalists concern all journalistic work, regardless of the medium. Nevertheless, they do not cover all situations arising in practice. The decisions and statements on principle of the Council for Mass Media interpret and complement these guidelines.

Good practice also involves a journalist knowing the most important laws, regulations, international agreements and resolutions related to his work.

Professional status

1. Decisions concerning the content of communications must be made on journalistic grounds. In no way must this authority be relinquished outside the editorial office.
2. A journalist is primarily responsible to his readers, listeners and viewers. He should not deal with subjects which might involve personal gain.
3. A journalist has the right and obligation to reject pressure or inducement with which someone might try to direct, prevent or limit communications.
4. A journalist must not misuse his own position or that of his medium nor accept benefits which might compromise his independence or his possibility to operate in accordance with the principles of his professional ethics.
5. A journalist must not act against own convictions or good journalistic practice. He can refuse assignments which are inconsistent with this principle.
6. Good practice must be observed in using the work of another party. Although this might not involve material with copyright protection, it is good practice to mention the source when using information acquired and published largely by a second party.
7. Textual advertising in all its forms is to be avoided. Material which can be associated with commercial interests should be viewed critically. Such material can only be published if there are strong journalistic arguments for this. The line between advertising and editorial material must be kept clear.

Correct information

8. In his work, a journalist must aim at truthful, essential and unbiased information.
9. Sources of information must be treated critically. This is particularly important in dealing with a controversial matter: the information source might have personal interests or the intention to cause damage.
10. Factual information must be checked as thoroughly as possible, including cases where the information has been published previously.
11. The public must be provided with the opportunity to distinguish facts from opinions and fictional material used to provide background. This principle does not restrict the choice of journalistic style or form.
12. Headlines, leads, cover and picture captions, sales-promotion posters for publications and other presentation material must be justified by the body of the story.
13. In addition, pictures and sound must be used truthfully. The recipient must be told whether the material is of a documentary or fictional nature.

Acquiring information

14. Information must be acquired openly and by using honest means. Exceptional methods can only be resorted to if information of general public importance cannot be obtained by normal means.
15. A person being interviewed must have the right to know in which medium and in what connection his statements will be used. It is also good practice to tell whether the conversation is intended for publication or simply as background material.
16. If justified, a journalist should comply with an interviewee's request to check his statement before publication to ensure questions of fact are correct. However, journalistic authority cannot be relinquished outside the editorial office by such checking.
17. Sources of information must be protected. The identity of a person providing confidential information cannot be disclosed without permission. This is also the case concerning the identity of a person employing a pseudonym or pen name in the journalist's own medium.

Corrections and right of reply

18. Incorrect information must be corrected without delay, either on a journalist's own initiative or when the person concerned requests it.
19. Someone subjected to heavy criticism must be granted the right of reply if he has grounds for requesting this. Simply a difference of opinion does not necessarily give entitlement to the right of reply.
20. If the request for a right to reply is justified, the reply must be published in a form desired by the person making the reply without delay and in such a manner that those receiving the original information can notice the reply easily.

21. If the reply is not fit for publication as such, changes to it should be discussed with the writer. If he cannot be contacted within a reasonable time, it is advisable to publish the reply in amended form. However, its essential contents must not be changed.
22. If a certain person is strongly criticized in the medium, it is good journalistic practice to make his point of view when possible in this connection.

Protection of the individual

23. The human dignity and reputation of every individual must be protected. Skin colour, nationality, origins, religious or political convictions, sex or other personal characteristics must not be published if they are not related to the matter or in a derogatory way.
24. Detrimental facts related to the private life of a person or his family should not be published unless these are of considerable public interest.
25. Care must be observed in the publication of photographs. A picture cannot be used in a misleading way or in connection with something offensive to the party concerned. Particular care must be taken in publishing pictures of victims of accidents or crime.
26. The publication of a name or other identifying facts when dealing with crime can only be justified on the grounds that considerable public interest is served by this. The identity of a person should generally not be disclosed before court proceedings unless the nature of the crime or the position of the party concerned provide strong reasons for this.
27. No prior assumption of guilt should be made, nor should the decision of a court or an authority be anticipated.
28. If a news item on the report of an offence, arrest, imprisonment, charge or complaint has been published, it is good journalistic practice to follow the proceedings of the case right up to the final resolution.
29. The principles covering the protection of the individual also apply when information contained in public documents or other public sources is being used. The public availability of information does not necessarily imply that it can be freely published.

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