

CODE OF ETHICS OF THE NORWEGIAN PRESS

Ethical Code of Practice for the Press (printed press, radio, television and net publications). Adopted by the Norwegian Press Association November 23th, 2007.

Each editor and editorial staff member is required to be familiar with these ethical standards of the press, and to base their practice on this code. The ethical practice comprehends the complete journalistic process from research to publication.

1. The Role of the Press in Society

1.1. Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Information and Freedom of the Press are basic elements of a democracy. A free, independent press is among the most important institutions in a democratic society.

1.2. The press has important functions in that it carries information, debates and critical comments on current affairs. The press is particularly responsible for allowing different views to be expressed.

1.3. The press shall protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the principle of access to official documents. It cannot yield to any pressure from anybody who might want to prevent open debates, the free flow of information and free access to sources. Agreements concerning exclusive event reporting shall not preclude independent news reporting.

1.4. It is the right of the press to carry information on what goes on in society and to uncover and disclose matters, which ought to be subjected to criticism. It is a press obligation to shed critical light on how media themselves exercise their role.

1.5. It is the task of the press to protect individuals and groups against injustices or neglect, committed by public authorities and institutions, private enterprises, or others.

2. Integrity and Responsibility

2.1. The legally responsible editor carries personal and full responsibility for the material contained in the publication, no matter the form.

2.2. Each editorial desk and each employee must guard their own integrity and credibility in order to be free to act independently of any persons or groups who - for ideological, economic or other reasons - might want to exercise an influence over editorial matters.

2.3. Members of the editorial staff must not accept commissions or offices, financial support or dual roles creating conflicts of interest in relation to their editorial tasks. Be open on matters that could influence the credibility of editorial staff members.

2.4. Members of the editorial staff should not use their position to achieve personal gains.

2.5. A member of the editorial staff cannot be ordered to write or do anything, which is contrary to his or her convictions.

2.6. Reject any attempt to break down the clear distinction between advertisements and editorial copy. Advertisements intended to imitate or exploit an editorial product, should be turned down, as should advertisements undermining trust in the editorial integrity and the independence of the press.

2.7. Never promise editorial favours in return for advertisements. The material is published as a result of editorial considerations. See to it that the vital distinction between journalism and commercial communication is being maintained upon employment of web links and other connective means.

2.8. It is a breach of good press conduct to let sponsorship affect editorial activity, contents and presentation.

2.9. Members of the editorial staff may not accept assignments from anyone but the heads of the editorial staff.

3. Journalistic Conduct and Relations with the Sources

3.1. The source of information must, as a rule, be identified, unless this conflicts with source protection or consideration for a third party.

3.2. Be critical in the choice of sources, and make sure that the information provided is correct. It is good press practice to aim for diversity and relevance in the choice of sources. If anonymous sources are used, or the publication is offered exclusivity, especially stringent requirements must be imposed on the critical evaluation of the sources. Particular caution should be exercised when dealing with information from anonymous sources, information from sources offering exclusivity, and information provided from sources in return for payment.

3.3. Good press conduct requires clarification of the terms on which an interview is being carried out. This also pertains to adjacent research.

3.4. Protect the sources of the press. The protection of sources is a basic principle in a free society and is a prerequisite for the ability of the press to fulfil its duties towards society and ensure the access to essential information.

3.5. Do not divulge the name of a person who has provided information on a confidential basis, unless consent has been explicitly given by the person concerned.

3.6. In consideration of the sources and the independence of the press, unpublished material as a main rule should not be divulged to third parties.

3.7. It is the duty of the press to report the intended meaning in quotes from an interview. Direct quotes must be accurate.

3.8. Changes of a given statement should be limited to corrections of factual errors. No one without editorial authority may intervene in the editing or presentation of editorial material

3.9. Proceed tactfully in journalistic research. In particular show consideration for people who cannot be expected to be aware of the effect that their statements may have. Never abuse the emotions or feeling of other people, their ignorance or their lack of judgment. Remember that people in shock or grief are more vulnerable than others.

3.10. Hidden cameras/microphones or false identity may only be used under special circumstances. The condition must be that such a method is the only possible way to uncover cases of essential importance to society.

3.11. The press shall as a rule not pay sources or interviewees for information. Exercise moderation when paying a consideration for news tips. It is incompatible with good press practice to employ payment schemes designed to tempt people, without due cause, to invade the privacy of others or to disclose sensitive personal information.

4. Publication Rules

4.1. Make a point of fairness and thoughtfulness in contents and presentation.

4.2. Make plain what is factual information and what is comment.

4.3. Always respect a person's character and identity, privacy, race, nationality and belief. Never draw attention to personal or private aspects if they are irrelevant.

4.4. Make sure that headlines, introductions and leads do not go beyond what is being related in the text. It is considered good press conduct to reveal your source when the information is quoted from other media.

4.5. In particular avoid presumption of guilt in crime and court reporting. Make it evident that the question of guilt, whether relating to somebody under suspicion, reported, accused or charged, has not been decided until the sentence has legal efficacy. It is a part of good press conduct to report the final result of court proceedings, which have been reported earlier.

4.6. Always consider how reports on accidents and crime may affect the victims and next-of-kin. Do not identify victims or missing persons unless next-of-kin have been informed. Show consideration towards people in grief or at times of shock.

4.7. Be cautious in the use of names and photographs and other clear identifiers of persons in referring to contentious or punishable matters. Special caution should be exercised when reporting cases at the early stage of investigation, cases concerning young offenders and cases in which an identifying report may place an unreasonable burden on a third party. Identification must be founded on a legitimate need for information. It may, for instance, be legitimate to identify someone where there is imminent danger of assault on defenceless individuals, in the case of serious and repeated crimes, if the identity or social position of the subject is patently relevant to the case being reported on, or where identification protects the innocent from exposure to unjustified suspicion.

4.8. Reporting on children, it is considered good press conduct to assess the implications that media focusing could cause in each case. This also pertains when the person in charge or parent, has agreed to exposure. As a general rule the identity of children should not be

disclosed in reports on family disputes or cases under consideration by the childcare authorities or by the courts.

4.9. Be cautious when reporting on suicide and attempted suicide. Avoid reporting that is not necessary for meeting a general need for information. Avoid description of methods or other matters that may contribute to provoking further suicidal actions.

4.10. Exercise caution when using photos in any other context than the original.

4.11. Protect the credibility of the journalistic photograph. Photos used as documentation must not be altered in a way that creates a false impression. Manipulated photos can only be accepted as illustrations if it is evident that it in actual fact is a picture collage.

4.12. The use of pictures must comply with the same requirements of caution as for a written or oral presentation.

4.13. Incorrect information must be corrected and, when called for, an apology given, as soon as possible.

4.14. Those who have been subjected to strong accusations shall, if possible, have the opportunity to simultaneous reply as regards factual information. Debates, criticism and dissemination of news must not be hampered by parties being unwilling to make comments or take part in the debate.

4.15. Those who have been the subject of an attack shall have the chance to reply at the earliest opportunity, unless the attack and criticism are part of a running exchange of views. Any reply should be of reasonable length, be pertinent to the matter and seemly in its form. The reply can be refused if the party in question has rejected, without an objective reason, an offer of presenting a contemporaneous rejoinder on the same issue. Replies and contributions to the debate should not be accompanied by polemic editorial comment.

4.16. Beware that digital publication pointers and links could bring you to other electronic media that do not comply with the Ethical Code. See to it that links to other media or publications are clearly marked. It is considered good press conduct to inform the users of interactive services on how the publication registers you, and possibly exploits your use of the services.

4.17. Should the editorial staff choose not to pre-edit digital chatting, this has to be announced in a clear manner for those accessing the pages. The editorial staff has a particular responsibility, instantly to remove inserts that are not in compliance with the Ethical Code.