

**PROGRAMME PRINCIPLES and
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
of Public Broadcasting Services
“Radio of Montenegro” and
“Television of Montenegro”**

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are free, independent and professional public service media of the citizens of Montenegro.

The objective of *Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro* is to satisfy the needs of population for high-quality factual, educational, cultural, artistic, and entertainment programmes and contents.

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro undertake the responsibility to produce and broadcast programmes on their channels in compliance with the highest general standards and values of democratic society, especially with respect to diversity, quality of programming and editorial integrity.

OBLIGATIONS OF RADIO OF MONTENEGRO AND TELEVISION OF MONTENEGRO AS PUBLIC SERVICES

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, as public broadcasting services of citizens, provide information to the citizens of the Republic of Montenegro on the level of standards contained in the international documents related to the field of broadcasting.

RTCG has the obligation to inform, entertain, and educate the population. It is accountable to the public for its activities.

The realisation of RTCG's role is based on the general principles of public service such as **universality, diversity, independence and recognisable character**.

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, as public broadcasting services of Montenegro, have to be available to the entire population. They address the entire population, regardless of the social position and income. Universal availability implies that listeners and viewers are able, not only to receive programmes equally on the entire territory of the Republic, but also that they can follow and understand them. *Radio and Television of Montenegro* shall also provide news covering international events, as well as high-quality international programmes, observing the principles of open society, according to which the citizens of Montenegro are also citizens of Europe and world.

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, as public broadcasting services, shall reflect a full range of public interests, offering diversity of programme contents and genres.

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, as public broadcasting services, represent public forums, where the ideas are expressed freely, where information, opinions and criticism circulates.

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro strive to be recognisable to listeners and viewers by the quality and special character of their programmes, programme innovations and promotion of top standards in audio-visual production.

Radio and Television of Montenegro produce, edit and broadcast their programmes independently from any political, economic and other centres of power.

Reliance on financing factual programmes from funds acquired by collecting subscription of listeners and viewers is the basis of editorial independence and institutional autonomy of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, as well as their primary obligation towards listeners and viewers and towards the general public.

OBJECTIVES OF RTCG

Radio of Montenegro and *Television of Montenegro* shall meet demands and interests of listeners and viewers, in compliance with the provisions of the Law on Public Broadcasting Services *Radio of Montenegro* and *Television of Montenegro* and Statute of *Radio and Television of Montenegro*, and both programmes of *Radio of Montenegro* and both programmes of *Television of Montenegro* and one radio and one television satellite programme shall:

- a.) be public services for information, education, culture, art, entertainment and sport;
- b.) stimulate, maintain, and promote diversity, and richness of living and cultural reality in Montenegro;
- c.) timely, comprehensively, impartially, and accurately deal with events in Montenegro, region and wider, in a balanced manner, supporting the fair and constructive dialogue on local, regional and national level;
- d.) contain educational programmes including general and specialized contents;
- e.) include high standard of programmes for children and youth;
- f.) contain proportional range of programmes for members of national and ethnic communities in Montenegro.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Factual/News programmes and all other programmes of *Radio of Montenegro* and *Television of Montenegro* have to adhere to the following professional standards:

Accuracy

The message conveyed has to reflect the facts and may not be misleading or untrue. Reports showing real persons must avoid techniques of virtual reality, except in cases where it serves the message or the protection of personal rights and when it is signalled as such.

Impartiality

Reporting shall not contain value judgements of its author.

The facts and viewpoints have to be conveyed and presented in a balanced way, and reporting has to take account of all relevant persons, institutions, and events.

Impartiality in factual programmes cannot be ensured by a simple balance that weighs standpoints with opposing ones, but by a complete presentation of the circumstances giving rise to these standpoints.

Reporting has to avoid anything causing reasonable doubt regarding the impartiality of the journalist or the public service broadcaster or which might create the idea that the journalist or the broadcaster are exposed to the pressure of an ideological, political, financial, social, religious or cultural nature.

A reporter may express a professional, journalistic judgement based on relevant facts, but not a personal opinion established as a consequence of one-sided views on certain issues.

The creators of radio and television programmes shall violate professional standards if they hide or neglect information they personally disagree with.

Censorship

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro, which provides for the right to free and independent information, any kind of censorship is illegal and unethical. The editors and journalists of RTCG must not succumb to any kind of pressure, direct or indirect, to censor their programmes. All different forms of conformist self-censorship are not consistent with independent journalism.

Checking facts

The journalists and editors of RTCG have to check all facts before going on air. If checking is not possible, the source has to be specified. In cases of special public importance, a source may be guaranteed anonymity in exchange to important information. The identity of such source must be known to the editors of the programme, and its credibility has to be checked. Special attention and checking of data are necessary when using unauthorised sources from the Internet, since it allows unlimited access and an uncritical use of data from these sources may lead to the passing on of misinformation to the audience. If an unauthorised source from the Internet is used anyway, it has to be marked clearly as such.

Credibility

Journalists and all other makers of the radio and television programmes of RTCG have to be independent in their work and have to maintain the autonomy of the journalistic profession and all other professions that help to form the content of radio and television programmes.

News programmes have to offer due account of events, data and statements, allowing viewers and listeners to form their own views. Journalists and editors are accountable not only for what they publish, but also for what they do not publish when it is of public interest.

RTCG shall not broadcast programmes containing and promoting hate speech, instigating hatred or prejudices against an individual, group or community.

It is of special importance for getting and maintaining credibility to make clear the difference between journalistic reports and commercials in programmes, and to avoid blurring the difference between these two.

It is necessary to keep distance from information disseminated by PR agencies creating an image and reputation for certain personalities for payment.

Right of reply and ratification

RTCG shall not hesitate to admit the factual mistake once it has been established. The mistakes must be clearly, punctually and timely corrected. The ratification must be timely publicised and it may not significantly exceed the length of the original incorrect broadcast.

The public accessibility of work

Journalistic work is public, and the journalists of RTCG are obliged to categorically refuse any attempt from any institution or individual to limit the public accessibility to information, or attempts to use it for certain interests not in accordance with the principles of freedom and independence of the journalist profession.

Fairness

No news or programme content are considered fair if they

- a.) do not include all relevant facts;
- b.) include unimportant facts and disregard the most significant ones;
- c.) mislead the viewers and listeners;
- d.) reporters use expressions or schemes that reveal their partiality.

Language

RTCG, as a public service broadcaster producing national programmes, must devote special care to language as an institutional category.

The language must be clear and simple, avoiding exaggeration and ambiguity. Programme presenters and moderators, as well as journalists (and all other employed and free-lance programme makers) are obliged to use the literary style of language in all programmes, including the programmes of national and ethnic communities.

It is recommendable to broadcast contributions by authors of the Albanian and other minorities in their mother tongue with sub-titles in the main news programmes at least occasionally.

In principle, the programmes of RTCG do not allow the usage of vulgar expressions or the use of language that is not in compliance with valid social norms.

Promotion of language, culture and art

RTCG shall promote Montenegrin national and cultural identity and language, as well as the values of Montenegrin multicultural society in all its diversity. The RTCG shall broadcast, instigate and promote multicultural creativity of Montenegro and contribute to it with its own production.

RTCG is obliged to cherish and promote the language as a constitutional category in both oral (synchronisation) and printed (sub-titles) form.

Providing the population with the insight in the best accomplishments in the region, Europe and broader, with the adequate percentage of the independent radio and TV production, RTCG will try to give Montenegrin cultural scene the seal of creativity of public service media. RTCG shall develop partnership with cultural institutions (state-owned and other) in Montenegro and outside of it.

Public access to major events

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro shall provide live coverage of events of major interest from social, economic, political, cultural and sports life (festivals, sport competitions, parliament debates, etc.), in compliance with the list of important events, which will be established by the Broadcasting Agency Council, in accordance with the Article 59.

Range of subjects

The programmes of RTCG have to ensure a suitable balance between international, national, regional and local news.

It is of equal importance that journalists and other programme makers of RTCG research and present positive as well as negative events, personalities and social phenomena, although they might not attract general attention.

Balance of information

RTCG programmes dealing with issues of public interest creating different public opinions must relate various standpoints adequately and evenly. That implies impartiality and a reasonable volume considering the weight of certain standpoints and opinions, their significance or potential significance.

If possible, the journalists have to find representatives of all involved parties and positions and present them in their programmes. If this proves to be impossible, they must inform the audience about it in a clear and direct way.

Journalists and editors must be aware of the necessity of balance in dealing with contentious issues. Program standard of RTCG is to provide objective and expert opinion about controversial subjects.

The opposed positions on controversial events, subjects and phenomena shall be presented in the same broadcast or in the following broadcast, which makes a part of the same series.

Balance of information in drama and documentaries

When drama realistically portrays living people or contemporary situations in a controversial fashion, it has an obligation to be accurate, to do justice to the main facts. A clear distinction should be drawn between plays based on facts or real characters, and dramatised documentaries which seek to reconstruct actual events. Audiences should be clear as to whether they are watching fact or fiction.

Coverage of Parliament

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro shall provide thorough and comprehensive coverage of parliamentary life in Montenegro. Reports from Parliament in the programmes of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro have to give an impartial account of the proceedings in the Assembly. That means that they need to present the complete range of opinions on a certain issue in a balanced manner. The journalist has to inform the audience in their report about the arguments of MPs in favour of and against a certain issue. Even after a proceeding is closed, it still raises contradictory opinions, and Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are still obliged to present them until, in their own judgement, all relevant opinions have been presented. The editing of speeches from Parliament has to show clearly that two sections of a speech have been used by providing a definite break or an explanation by the journalist making clear that the two sections are not continuous. All forms of manipulation in the editing process are prohibited. Statements made in Parliament enjoy qualified privilege when reported, which gives Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro a defence to libel.

Due to the substantial public significance of certain parliamentary sessions, Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro shall provide direct coverage of parliamentary session when the following items are on the agenda:

- Adoption of the Constitution
- Constitution of the Parliament and election of the Parliament Speaker,
- Elections of the Prime Minister,
- Elections and revocation of the Government,
- Discussion on confidence for the Government,
- Address of the President of the Republic of Montenegro and Prime Minister of the Republic of Montenegro to the Parliament and discussion with regard to that,
- Adoption of the physical plan, Budget, and annual statement of accounts of the Republic,
- Adoption of system laws adopted by the majority of votes of total number of MPs
- Ceremonial Parliament sessions.

Upon editorial judgement, the programme management takes the decision to transmit other sessions of the Parliament of Montenegro.

Coverage of political parties

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro report on the work of the political parties day by day, whereby their mission as public service broadcasters requires a balanced attitude towards all parties.

Pursuant to the Article 96 of the Broadcasting Law, there shall be no political propaganda in the programmes of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, except during the election campaigns.

The presence of a political party in the broadcasts of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro depends on its activity. Press conferences should not be the only gauge of their activity. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are not obliged, except during election campaigns, to allocate parties equal shares of programme time in advance. The editors should aim over time to give due prominence to all the main strands of argument and all the main parties. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are obliged to invite all parliamentary parties for a discussion. Where a participant is invited, but refuses or is unable to appear, this should not normally act as a reason for cancelling the broadcast. In such a case, Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro will strive to ensure a suitable exchange in order to be able to present different viewpoints. However, if that may cause the programme to be one-sided and unbalanced it is necessary to postpone the broadcast.

In the case of broadcasting rather long talks with the Prime Minister on topical issues, we have to provide similar opportunities for a broadcast by the parties in opposition. If the opposition consists of more than two parties, the broadcast must not exceed by more than one and half times the Prime Minister's contribution. The programme has to be aired in an equivalent programme slot, if possible immediately after the appearance of the Prime Minister or in the following edition of the same programme series.

Election Campaigns

Pursuant to the Article 97 of the Broadcasting Law, the RTCG Council shall adopt separate regulations on political propaganda during the election campaign.

Relations with state authorities/government bodies

Although established by the Republic of Montenegro, RTCG acts as an independent and autonomous public service broadcaster. Programme management and journalists co-operate with government bodies on an equal level, and do not take or execute their orders or instructions.

The programmes of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro provide integral and detailed reporting on the work of Government and other official bodies

and cover with due accuracy and in detail the viewpoints of the opposition and the representatives of civil society.

Editors and journalists should keep a professional distance from all instruments of power, since they might otherwise jeopardise the integrity of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro.

Legal provisions on state and military secrets impose an obligation on officials and institutions keeping such documents. A military or official secret might in certain circumstances serve as a cover for the interests of individuals, groups or services wishing to conceal important facts or illegal proceedings from the public. The publication of such documents is decided by the Director of Radio of Montenegro and Director of Television of Montenegro.

Relations with the army

In covering military issues, the editorial management of RTCG respects the democratic principle that the army is subject to civil authority.

Relations with the police

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro help the public by broadcasting police messages or warnings of traffic problems or emergencies. News programmes will carry police appeals for information about serious crime.

Information programming has to explore the role of the police, as well as other state authorities impartially. Editors and journalists must consider the pros and cons of accepting invitations to accompany officers on particular operational duties, given that there is a clear public benefit in seeing the operations carried out, but there are risks too.

PRODUCTION STANDARDS

Information gathering

❖ Opinion polls

Polling and its results need to be applied according to the professional standards of accuracy, impartiality and credibility of information. Opinion polls and surveys are not carried out by the journalists and editorial departments of RTCG, but are commissioned to other institutions and experts competent and authorised to conduct surveys based on tested methods and recognised standards. All survey initiatives must be authorised in advance by the programme director.

❖ Broadcasting results of opinion polls

Prior to broadcasting the results of any opinion poll, the journalists concerned are expected to:

- a) obtain all necessary information on the methods used, as well as the main results of the survey;
- b) compare the interpretation of the results by the authors of the study with the opinions of other experts in the field;
- c) establish the validity of the methods used and the interpretation of the results.

In broadcasting the results of surveys, journalists must:

- a) give prominence to the actual data over interpretation of that data;
- b) report the name of the person or organisation conducting the survey, and where relevant, the political party affiliation, the name of the sponsor, the population surveyed, the size of the sample, the period during which the survey was conducted, the response rate and the margin of error.

Detailed data is accessible on RTCG Internet pages.

❖ Non-scientific surveys

Surveys that are not conducted according to recognised standards do not provide valid results or reliable information.

Special care must be exercised in the presentation, whether live or pre-recorded, of statements gathered through interviews with randomly selected persons or the audience of a phone-in programme. Comments gathered in this way must be presented for the sole purpose of illustrating the range and texture of popular opinion.

Care must be taken not to suggest that such presentations reflect the distribution or weight of opinion in the community on one or another of a question. In cases of ad hoc polling of citizens concerning certain controversial social matters, it is necessary to exercise high level of caution and eliminate the possibility of manipulation.

❖ Telephone votes

In its news and factual programmes, Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro do not conduct telephone votes or broadcast the results of such votes. Exceptions are some light entertainment programmes where telephone voting is coupled to the methodology of international and other contests and where the lack of reliability and credibility of telephone voting is counter-balanced by other methods of voting and evaluating the contestants or participants.

❖ Phone-ins

In phone-ins broadcast live, producers must constantly be alert to the possibility of callers breaking the law or causing widespread offence in matters of taste, decency or language.

Callers to such programmes need to be presented by name and family name, which is especially important in programmes dealing with political subject matter (voting on personalities and statements, etc.).

A presentation by name and family name is not necessarily required in so called advice/counselling programmes (health programmes, farming programmes, etc.).

Privacy and the gathering of information

❖ Privacy versus public life

The privacy of an individual within the broadcasts of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro in this sense means the personal and private life of an individual apart from their public life. Journalists on occasion may appear to breach an individual's privacy. This is warranted only when the individual's private life impinges on or becomes part of their public life or becomes a matter of legitimate public concern.

There are a number of situations in which individuals cannot or should not be identified. In such cases photographs or any incidental detail that could give hints to the individual's identity shall not be used.

Generally accepted professional standard says that the right to privacy is inversely proportional to the individual's public function. Even when the personal affairs of public figures become a proper subject of inquiry, they do not forfeit all rights to privacy. It is essential to respect people's right to privacy and to investigate and establish relevant matters which it is in the public interest to know about.

❖ Identity of a suspect

In reporting on subjects under police investigation, careful consideration should be given to whether public interest or the protection of the individual is an overriding consideration. In cases where the information passed on by the police or other investigative bodies reveals the suspect's identity (e.g. their initials, etc.) to an extent that makes it implausible to hide it in the report, their name and other information on their identity may be disclosed, but this requires prior approval by the Director.

❖ Identity of an accused

The accused in court proceedings shall not be presented in humiliating circumstances. When a person accused of a criminal offence is identified in a broadcast, only part of the judicial process is being aired; between the charge and the trial there may be a considerable lapse of time. Therefore, the consequences for an innocent person could be damaging. When the accused in a criminal case has been identified, there must be a follow-up report of equal prominence on the verdict.

❖ Identity of crime victims

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are obliged not to cause unnecessary grief to the victims and they generally do not broadcast their identity, except in one of the following circumstances:

- a) the victim consents to the disclosure (in writing or on tape);
- b) the victim volunteers their story for broadcast;
- c) in exceptional cases when the public interest is an overriding consideration.

When, without due legal process, an alleged victim accuses somebody of a crime against his or her person, RTCG does not grant the privilege of anonymity to the alleged victim. Furthermore, the broadcasting of the accusations is dependent on a thorough review, by editorial management and the legal department, of the credibility of the person, of the evidence he or she brings forward and of the risk of a suit for defamation.

Under no circumstances, other than the death of the victim, does RTCG broadcast the identity of a minor who is a crime victim.

❖ Protection of sources of information

Information from a source who does not wish to be publicly identified may be used if the source is known to the journalist and if they have prima facie credibility. However, to avoid the possibility of being manipulated into broadcasting inaccurate or biased information, the journalist must carefully check the reliability of the source and must obtain corroborative evidence from at least two other pertinent sources.

Disclosure of sources to the programme editor should not be confused with public disclosure of sources. The programme editor has to treat such information with absolute confidentiality. Where the editor considers that a report lacks a certain

element making it possible to establish credibility and accuracy, he or she has the right to reject the airing of such an item.

Protection of sources is an ethical right to the profession, which like the medical and legal professions, is bound by special duties and rights. Journalist and editor must be familiar with the reasons certain source has to remain anonymous. They are obliged to clarify all conditions related to any promise given in exchange to information. Journalist may not guarantee protection of source of information when it would jeopardise safety of the citizens or protect criminal activities. In such cases RTCG will not advise an employee to refuse to obey a court order.

❖ **Anonymous programme participants**

Accuracy and integrity in journalism require that the identity of an interviewee be evident to the audience.

Cases in which an anonymous interview is warranted require the prior approval of the editor-in-chief of information programme.

❖ **Refusal of appearance in a programme**

Anyone has a right to refuse to appear in a programme. When the audience might reasonably ask why an individual is not represented, it might be right to explain a refusal to appear.

❖ **Embargoes**

Editors and journalists of RTCG have to observe embargoes on certain material. That does not prevent them from trying to persuade the source of information to lift or vary its embargo. If embargoes are broken by other media, Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro will in each case consider the justification for doing so.

❖ **News and Reports**

News and reports have to be clear, indubitable, exact and open to corroboration. News should not include elements of commentary. RTCG refrains from broadcasting so-called commented news and reports. All facts have to be checked; where it is not possible to check all facts, the news sources need to be clearly stated.

❖ **Interviews**

The interviewer must inform the interviewee before the interview about the purpose for which it will be used. In using interview, RTCG must conduct itself in accordance with conditions agreed to prior to the interview.

When two or more people are individually interviewed for the same programme or series of programmes, no one participant may be shown or allowed to hear the comments of the other(s).

When interviewing is recorded for later editing, interviewees should be dealt with fairly. This includes telling them that their contribution will be edited. An interviewee who is asked to reply to detailed criticism should be given an opportunity to respond to each of the main points of substance made by the interviewee in the full recording. Choosing only the weaker responses of an interviewee in preference to effective rebuttal is unfair.

Programmes should be wary of agreeing to treat "as live" an interview which is to be recorded.

❖ **Phone-out interviews**

The person called must be informed of the purpose of the interview, and permission obtained from them before the interview is broadcast.

When phone-outs are for back-to-back interviews of parties to different sides of a dispute, the first interviewee must be informed of the presence of the second before the interview begins and, if warranted, offered the opportunity of a brief rebuttal.

When the subject is a matter of public controversy, balance is mandatory.

❖ **Commentary**

The mission of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro requires that they inform the audience as extensively as possible in a balanced and unbiased manner on events of national and international importance. Journalists may in no case use only those facts that suit their personal opinion. When broadcasting the comment of a journalist, it needs to be clearly signalled to the audience. Commentaries need to include all major viewpoints on an issue.

❖ **Payments**

As a general rule, RTCG does not pay news sources.

If exceptional payment to sources should be contemplated in the best interest of the public, approval of the Director is required. The fact that such payments were made must be reported in the broadcast.

RTCG shall not make payment of any kind to civil servants (MPs, state counsellors, ministers, government and party officials) as sources of information.

Coverage of exceptional events

❖ Coverage of demonstrations

While reporting, the RTCG journalists are to observe the following guidelines:

- a) Journalists should inquire into the identity of the organisers, the purpose of the demonstration and the number of participants.
- b) The decision to cover a demonstration should not be communicated to anyone outside RTCG. The prospect of coverage may influence attendance and plans.
- c) Journalists must maintain their distance from organisers and demonstrators.
- d) Reporting teams should be wary of persons or groups who are clearly performing for the cameras or microphones.
- e) Reporting teams must not make any suggestions or requests to demonstrators that could lead to the staging of events.
- f) When a planned public event is disturbed by a demonstration, the event itself should still receive the coverage it deserves.
- g) The decision to broadcast a report must be based on the importance of the event, protest or demonstration.

❖ Civil disorder

When plans are being made for the coverage of events where civil violence may be expected, every precaution should be taken to ensure that the presence of RTCG journalists, cameras or microphones is not a provocation. If their presence is evidently inspiring a potentially dangerous situation, they should cease using recording equipment and, in some circumstances, even conceal it.

❖ Terrorism

Journalists of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro are obliged to report all forms of terrorism impartially.

RTCG journalists must ensure that any action they take will not further endanger the lives of hostages or interfere with the efforts of authorities to secure hostages' release.

When reporting on terrorist acts, journalists and camera crews should obey the following guidelines:

- a) Any direct communication from terrorists/hostage takers, which contains information about current or contemplated acts of terrorism should be reported immediately to the Directors of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro.

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- b) No live broadcast of a statement by or interview with a terrorist/hostage taker or hostage may occur without authorisation from the programme director. Such authorisation will only be provided in exceptional circumstances.
 - c) Statements or demands by terrorists/hostage takers form an integral part of the incident. In most cases, however, these should be broadcast in summary or edited form to avoid the danger of manipulation.
 - d) Telephone or other direct contact with hostages or terrorists/hostage takers or both should only be undertaken if, in the judgement of the Directors of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, such activity does not interfere with the authorities' communications or further jeopardise the safety of hostages.
 - e) Reporters and producers should promptly convey to the Directors of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro any request made by the authorities to delay the broadcasting of certain information regarding the crisis or investigation in progress or on the grounds of safety.

❖ Reporting crime and accidents

When reporting crime and accidents, we should refrain from sensationalism. We should try to avoid creating unfounded panic, but must strive for balanced crime coverage, making people aware of the danger of violent crime. When reporting crime, RTCG journalists have to consider that the right to information is not to be set above the right to the privacy and dignity of individuals.

Professional means

❖ Text

A text should focus on the facts. When reporting on criminal acts, we may talk about suspects, not about criminals. The principle that anyone is innocent until a court finds them guilty applies here. Where there is no information from official sources available, the RTCG journalists have to clearly signal from which sources information used by the journalist has been gathered.

The RTCG journalist should preferably rely on findings by the investigating authorities, the police and experts. Where the journalists discover ambiguity, contradiction, deception, inactivity or deviation in an official investigation, they may start a parallel journalistic investigation. They are obliged to inform the programme director about that.

When the official sources publish the initials of suspects, who are public figures (in politics, sports, show-business, etc.), the full name may be published upon prior approval by the programme director. Reference to the source should be made.

❖ Picture

When recording and editing crime reports we need to consider that it is not in accordance with our professional and ethical standards to:

a) show helpless crime victims, accidents, close-up shots of blood on faces, bodies, etc. Such scenes need to be shot from a distance, where details that might reveal the identity of the victim are not recognisable.

b) RTCG journalists and programme-makers must ensure that anti-social or criminal behaviour are not presented in a manner that may instigate identification or imitation. Special attention should be paid in presentation of criminal techniques.

❖ Clandestine methods of news gathering

Clandestine methods of news gathering should only be employed with due regard to their legality, to considerations such as fairness and invasion of privacy. This manner of information gathering is used only when the information to be obtained is of such significance as to warrant being made public, but is unavailable by other means.

❖ Misrepresentation

RTCG employees must not use dishonourable and illegitimate methods to obtain information. RTCG employees should not misrepresent themselves or their purposes to gain information.

However, there may be occasions when it serves a legitimate programme purpose for a journalist not to declare his or her profession, but to seek information as an ordinary member of the public. Occasions of this sort might occur, for example, during investigations of schemes to defraud the public. If it is considered important and in the public interest to seek information, without disclosing a journalistic purpose, in places in which the public normally does not have access, approval of the Directors of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro must be obtained.

❖ Hidden cameras and microphones

As a general rule, RTCG journalists must not use hidden cameras and microphones to gather information.

In exceptional occasions, the use of such concealed recording devices is permitted.

Prior authorisation must be obtained from the Directors of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro for hidden recording. The authorisation may be given only if the information gained serves an important public purpose, is indispensable to that purpose and cannot be obtained by any other means.

Light entertainment and similar programmes may include street polls if the people who feature prominently in these recordings have given their permission before the material is broadcast.

❖ Leakage of official/confidential information

Leakage of information from governmental institutions is a special form of anonymous informing used when certain state officials wish to inform the public about confidential subjects. Such information has to be checked carefully regarding credibility and aim.

❖ Investigative journalism

It is essential for the RTCG programmes to be based on scrupulous and thorough investigation in order to be in compliance with the principles of accuracy, integrity, fairness and comprehensiveness. Journalists should take into account all the relevant evidence available and include recognition of the range of opinion on the matter in question.

It is necessary to give opportunity to all parties directly concerned to state their case. To avoid the possibility of being manipulated into advancing inaccurate or biased information, the journalist must carefully check the reliability of a source and must obtain corroborative evidence from other pertinent sources.

Information Processing

❖ Hosts and interviewers

Host and interviewers must treat their guests fairly. They should not be critical or demanding of some, while conciliatory and sympathetic to others.

❖ Reporters

The role of the reporter is to convey news to the audience, with maximum fairness, accuracy and integrity.

In providing comprehensive coverage, reporters may want to offer some context to news events. To do this, they may present an explanation of the background to the event based on careful research. They must not, however, express or reflect their personal opinion or bias.

The objective in providing context and analysis is to ensure that the audience, which relies on journalism as a primary source of information, is given as clearly as possible an explanation of news events, personalities and issues.

❖ Guest commentators

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro do not adopt as its own the opinions of those commentators whom they invite to articulate the various shades of current opinion on a given subject. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro's concern is to ensure the presentation of a wide spectrum of opinion,

particularly when the matter is sharply controversial. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, therefore, seek to select commentators whose background qualifies them to give expert opinions based on accurate information.

Any relevant aspect of a commentator's credentials must be clearly summarised, so that the audience may have a perspective from which to appraise the speaker's view.

❖ **Editing**

In spite of the time limitations imposed by radio and television production, the editing process must result in reflection of what has been originally seen or heard.

The final result is a compression of reality, a slice of reality, which must nonetheless reflect the essential truth.

❖ **Editing interviews**

The following are important guidelines for editing interviews:

- a) Questions and answers must not be edited so as to change the original meaning, or distort the sense of the original interview as a whole.
- b) Answers to questions given in one context must not be edited into another.
- c) An answer to a question must not be placed in a programme so that it purports to be an answer to a question other than that actually posed.
- d) In cases where the editing process requires repeating questions, reactions or cut-aways, the nature and intent of the original response must be preserved.
- e) Listeners and viewers must not be misled into thinking a discussion is taking place between people when no such discussion was recorded.
- f) For reasons of fairness and professionalism, recorded interviews must not be added to, changed, distorted or completely new questions by the interviewer given.

❖ **Use of library material**

The audience must be advised when audio or visual material was recorded much in advance of the programme.

Re-use of an interview or part of an interview should be handled in such a way that the context of the original interview is not distorted.

❖ **Editorial use of technology**

Special effects, including sound effects, should be used with particular care in the presentation of journalistic material. On the rare occasions when they are used, rigorous judgement must be applied to ensure that they do not distort reality or have the effect of producing editorial comment.

❖ **Composition of pictures**

Due to their predominant suggestive power, camera shots are decisive factors in establishing emotional and rational identification, creating impressions, judgements and opinions. There are two prevailing camera approaches, the subjective or personal (used in fiction programmes) and the objective or reporting (used in factual programmes).

The pictures or the shots in factual programmes are to reflect the event or proceeding objectively. The only eligible fictional element is duration, when the real duration of the event is adapted by cutting and editing to a suitable time frame. Live transmissions of events or proceedings constitute an exception.

Visual means permit unintended or deliberately false portrayals of events, circumstances or personalities. Therefore, we should carefully consider camera angles, post-production changes and changes of content caused by the application of technical means.

❖ **Recording, selection of camera frames and angles**

In factual programmes we should refrain from using low or high camera angles when portraying personalities, especially public figures.

A low camera angle raises the status in the portrayed personality, whereas a high camera angle causes exactly the opposite effect.

Camera angles and techniques revealing the private life and reactions of the portrayed individual or intimate details may be employed only upon prior approval by the individual portrayed.

❖ **Use of post-production computer technology**

The use of computer animation and special effects may compromise the authenticity and integrity of recorded material. In factual programmes we should therefore refrain from using effects such as stop motion, slow motion, double exposure or other effects modifying what is being broadcast if they are not employed for the purpose of carrying more detailed information on an event, development or personality.

❖ **Reconstruction and simulation of an event**

A reconstruction or simulation can be the most effective means of conveying certain types of information, such as space exploration or the events surrounding an accident. If an event or portion of an event is reconstructed or simulated in the course of a programme, this must be made clear to the audience by audio or visual means.

Library material

❖ Labelling of library material

Library material used to illustrate topical events or issues needs to be clearly signposted. Library material should not be used to illustrate an event in a way that would lead the viewers and listeners to believe that it is an actual event.

❖ Abuse of library material

If it is not obvious from the context of the report, the use of library material should be labelled as "library material" with the date of recording.

We should not use library material to illustrate events in a way that might be misleading the audience.

- a) Library material of an event should not be used to illustrate another event.
- b) Dramatised portrayals or reconstructions must not be presented as documentary material. When using a dramatised scene as a story-telling device in a documentary film due to a lack of authentic material, it has to be clearly signalled to the audience,
- c) An event may be reconstructed with the prime purpose of conveying factual information due to a lack of authentic material and must be clearly signalled. Audiences must not be in doubt as to where a reconstruction begins and ends.
- d) The constant repetition of the same material for illustrating different subjects explored in news and current affairs programmes might be misleading, especially when it includes pictures of identifiable people.

❖ Library material portraying crime

Each use of such material needs a separate decision requiring judgement and taste.

- a) Do not use library material of one identifiable crime to illustrate another.
- b) It will rarely be appropriate to use pictures of the scene of a crime to preview a forthcoming inquest or trial.
- c) When selecting illustrative library material, we have to avoid inattentive and frequent use of racial, national, religious, sexual and other stereotypes.

❖ Mixture of actuality and dramatisation

Journalistic programmes must not as a general principle mix actuality (visual and audio of actual events and of real people) with a dramatised portrayal of real or historical figures and events.

If that happens, the dramatised portion must be clearly identified.

❖ Satire

It is ambiguous enough in its effect that its use in such programmes may lead to confusion on the part of the audience. Satirical items should be treated in such manner to be easily recognised by the audience as information presented from a humorous angle.

Respecting the values of viewers and listeners

❖ Respecting good taste

In application of these standards, especially with regard to language, violence, sexual behaviour, certain level of responsible flexibility will be exercised. We are aware that there are different standards that can be applied to different target groups. There are strict distinctions between what is considered acceptable for broadcasting, depending on social environment and generation.

There is no consensus on what is "contrary to good taste", "decent" or "explicit" in, for example, presentation of sexual matters. What is considered indecent by one age group is perfectly acceptable for others.

Scenes of violence: Any material approving of, promoting or glorifying violence shall not be broadcast. These restrictions do not refer to bona fide scientific, documentary, dramatic, artistic or debate/discussion programmes.

Scenes of pain: May be used only when it is necessary for understanding of information important for the public. It might be legitimate to present personal grief in programmes, but it must not be exploited for sensationalist effect.

Scenes of sex: Material containing scenes featuring persons younger than 18 in sexual contacts shall not be broadcast, as well as the explicit scenes of sex or bestiality, or sexual behaviour degrading a person by promoting certain type of haltered based on gender or inciting violence. All these restrictions do not refer to bona fide scientific, documentary, dramatic, materials.

Language: Offensive language shall not be used before 22 o'clock, or at any time when it is probable that many children will be in audience.

Adult programmes: Television programmes involving scenes of violence, explicit sexual scenes or offensive language produced for adult audience shall not be broadcast before the watershed period, starting at 22 o'clock.

Children in audience and children's programme: RTCG shall not broadcast programming unsuitable for children at time when it can be expected that children make a large part of the audience. The children's programmes must follow certain guidelines related to language, violence, family conflicts, death or possible imitations of these events.

In its children's and youth programmes, RTCG shall especially promote and instigate multicultural and multinational approach, in order to enable them to

grow up understanding that cultural, religious and national diversity is natural and positive factor of Montenegrin society.

Health issues: Before broadcasting, all facts with a potential influence on people's health need to be checked with medical experts, even if it might result in a delay in the production of the programme. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro adhere strictly to the principle of confidentiality of data on patients and their medical records. We must not, in any way, hurt a patient's feelings or human dignity. Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro mustn't hurt feelings or dignity of the patients in any way. They should respect the privacy of the patient's next of kin and other relatives. Peoples' privacy should also be protected when covering natural disasters. Close-ups of injured or otherwise affected persons should be avoided when possible.

Instructions for viewers and listeners: In order to help the audience to select programme, when such programmes contain violence, scenes of sex and/or offensive language, RTCG will provide everyday advisory assistance, including, when necessary, guidelines related to age at the beginning of programmes.

Special interest programmes

❖ Programmes for national and ethnic communities

Radio of Montenegro and television of Montenegro devote pertinent attention to the life of all indigenous national and ethnic communities in Montenegro. For that purpose, they shall:

- a.) stimulate, instigate and promote multicultural, multi-confessional and multiethnic harmony in Montenegro, as cornerstones and highest civilization values;
- b.) portray cultural, ethnic and religious communities in a balanced and impartial manner, avoiding stereotypes;
- c.) stimulate and promote the culture of tolerance by means of multicultural programming, with mandatory prime time terms.

❖ Montenegrins and members of national and ethnic communities in diaspora

Montenegrins and members of national and ethnic communities abroad are one of the major concerns of programmes of public services Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro. Their lives and work are reflected in programmes dealing with the specific needs and maintaining relations with them.

Portrayal of special sections of society

RTCG has a responsibility to serve all sections of society. In their programmes, Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro shall exclude possibility of discrimination based on sex, origin, culture, political belief, social status, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status or disability.

❖ Portrayal of women

It is inappropriate to create and emphasise the impression that certain activities are the preserve of one sex only. Since for almost all professions there are comfortable alternatives which are not sexist, we should use these non-sexist terms.

❖ Portrayal of people with disabilities

People with disabilities should be well represented in RTCG programmes in appropriate manner, and the audience should be accurately and impartially informed and warned about their concerns and interests.

Special care needs to be paid so that the terminology used is modern and acknowledged by experts, and avoids the use of obsolete, offensive terms of everyday language.

When referring to disabled children, we use appropriate terminology in the same context.

People with disabilities have to be able to access the premises and studios where the programme is being produced and should be presented in the programme as they would wish.

❖ Portrayal of sexual minorities

In portraying sexuality, we have to avoid simplification, stereotypes and personal judgement. We must not confuse homosexuality with transvestism or transsexualism.

❖ Portrayal of elderly people

Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro pay special attention to the portrayal of elderly people; the aim is to help to shape an appropriate public attitude to the ever-increasing number of elderly population. This includes programmes targeting elderly people.

❖ **Children and minors in the programmes of radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro**

Children can be involved in programmes in a number of ways: as actors, interviewees, participants a programme and even, occasionally, as programme makers themselves.

We should also respect the interest of children as viewers of and listeners to programmes of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro, whether these programmes are aimed specifically at them, or at a general audience.

It will often be appropriate to seek the consent of parents or legal guardians before interviewing young children, or otherwise involving them in programmes.

Journalists and other programme makers should consider carefully the impact of programmes on a child involved in it, both in the way it is made, and any possible impact it may have when broadcast.

When dealing with dangerous or illegal activity among children, such as drug taking or prostitution, it is often advisable for programme teams to be accompanied by experts throughout their contact with the children.

When factual programmes feature children involved in illegal or anti-social activity, identification may raise difficult ethical issues. There may be a public interest in identifying the children concerned, but the longer-term interests of the child may argue for anonymity. Programme makers should refer to a more senior programme maker where they are in doubt about the balance of interest. Parental consent may not be a sufficient reason to identify a child if the child's long-term future would be better served by anonymity.

When recording anti-social or criminal practices by children with the intention of highlighting the practice rather than the individuals, the general rule of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro is that individual children will not be identified.

Interviews with children need particular care. Children can be easily led in questioning and are often open to suggestion. Programme makers should be careful of prompting children and should allow them to speak for themselves. Children should not be talked down to or patronised.

Any matters leading to the identification in the court proceedings of a witness, defendant or other party in those proceedings who is under 18 may not be revealed. The restrictions include the naming of schools and of addresses. No picture of a person under 18 can be broadcast. A child involved in criminal proceedings as a defendant, a victim or a witness cannot be identified.

The same is valid for care proceedings, adoption, guardianship and similar concerns.

Child victims of sexual offences may not be identified either.

Interference

❖ **Requests to Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro to withhold material**

Once material is recorded in accordance with journalistic policies, it may be used for broadcast provided no considerations intervene outweighing the programme need, and no other agreement was made at the time of recording.

Good judgement must be exercised to balance the reasons for a request to withhold material against programme requirements.

If requests are made to withhold material from broadcast after it has been willingly recorded, producers and supervisors must consider the nature of the agreement which was made at the time of the recording. If the projected use of the material is in accordance with that agreement, and provided no other considerations intervene, a request to withhold the material from broadcast should not be granted.

Efforts should always be made to explain the position of Radio of Montenegro and Television of Montenegro.

❖ **Veto of programme material by invited programme participants**

Participants in programmes will not be granted the right to veto any portion of a programme.

PROTECTION OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

In accordance with the laws governing RTCG, listeners and viewers have to turn first to the Commission for Petitions and Complaints of Listeners and Viewers and Commission for Programming in Albanian and Languages of other National and Ethnic Communities with their complaints, proposals and suggestions.

These Commissions of the RTCG Council shall adhere to the aforementioned objectives and standards, as the basis for adoption of their recommendations and positions. Recommendations and positions of the commissions shall be published in the RTCG Bulletin.

The Council shall decide on the violation of programme principles and professional standards and assist the programme directors in undertaking adequate measures.

Advertising, promotion and sponsorship in RTCG programmes

In compliance with the RTCG Statute, the RTCG Council shall adopt a separate regulation of advertising and sponsorship in the RTCG programmes based on the programme quotas, to be prescribed the Broadcasting Agency in accordance with the European standards.

Other rights, obligations and responsibilities of journalists, editors, other programme-makers and bodies of RTCG.

Other rights, obligations and responsibilities

Other rights, obligations and responsibilities of journalists, editors, other programme-makers and bodies of RTCG shall be regulated by the RTCG Ethic Code, adopted by the RTCG Council.

FINAL PROVISIONS

Programme principles and professional standards of RTCG comes into effect on the date of their adoption by the RTCG Council.

This document shall be printed and made accessible to the public in both printed and electronic version, and distributed to all employees.

Podgorica, september 2003.

PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL OF RTCG

Branislav Čalić