



MARS – MEDIA AGAINST RACISM IN SPORT

Media, Diversity & Racism in Sport

NATIONAL MEDIA ENCOUNTER

Ethics & Editorial Management

PROVISIONAL REPORT

21 & 22 SEPTEMBER 2012

Hotel DOWNTOWN

27, Vasil Levski Blvd

1040 Sofia

Bulgaria

[Website](#)

Tel.: 359 800 97 33 42 26



MARS - Media Against Racism in Sport

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



EUROPEAN UNION



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

KEY POINTS

The topic is very pressing and controversial, but also difficult, because it requires that everyone admits what they still have not done, what they have neglected and what compromises they have made.

The question remains open – whether racism is a social problem, or a problem of the media. The professional challenges are the same in all media – the lack of balanced coverage, which can lead to unethical reporting.

Journalists need to be aware of the (discriminative) language they use while report issues related to the ethnic minorities or racial groups, and should not.

It was raised that journalists have poor knowledge of national and international discrimination law, as well as the ethic codes. They fail to abide these regulations and codes.

Bulgarian journalists believe that the issue of discrimination hasn't been tackled thoroughly by taking consideration of the social aspect, but rather superficially. The blame is often put on the corporate and commercial culture in the media.

Why do we look for traces of racism and discrimination firstly in the sports sector? Sport is their outer, public and most evident manifestation; furthermore, it is the one getting the most coverage, being an arena of passions, aggression and violence. Some of the harshest discriminative practices are reported to be in the sports sector.

For example, 90 per cent of the contents in the sports columns are related to football, while other sports, practiced and covered by women, are neglected. Sport activities for veterans, children and handicapped people also seem to be overlooked.

However, unlike in Europe, where the percentage is very low, in Bulgaria, the number of women in the sport sector is very high in all type of media – press, radio, TV and Internet. Attention was also drawn to the fact that Bulgarian sports journalists are comparatively younger than their European colleagues.

The main conclusion from the conference in Sofia was of the forthcoming exchange in practices on the subject of racism and discrimination. As a part of the social and economic processes, they require balanced media coverage.

NEXT STEPS

The Union of Bulgarian Journalists should distribute its Code of Ethics to as much colleagues as possible

The Union should continue its work on the subject in its local branch offices.

The Union's website should be more active in explaining the principles of ethical journalism, giving global practices for example. The most common complaints, received by the National Council for Journalistic Ethics and the Union's Committee for Journalistic Ethics should also be published at www.sbj-bg.eu.

The editors in chief should include the ethical requirements in their employees' contracts. They should also organize team-building events and editorial trainings on the subject.

The level of media literacy should be increased and the term freedom of speech should be clarified, which will lead to more accurate articles. Seminars should be organized to inform the journalists of the modern European practices on the problems of ethics, diversity and non-discrimination.

Students in university should be acquainted with the problems we discussed while still studying Journalism. Everyone should be able to improve their work by looking into the necessary code or source.

The Union of Bulgarian Journalists' Committee for Journalistic Ethics and the National Journalistic Council's Committee for Ethics in the Press have given judgements for all complaint.

Lately there has been a considerable increase in the number of complaints to both of these committees, which means that the people's confidence in them has also increased. Moreover, the topic of non-discrimination and tolerance has started to attract more attention. The Committee for Ethics and the Union's Committee have investigated respectively 250 and 70-80 complaints.

Discrimination can be subtle. Journalists should be more sensitive when covering the issue to unravel hidden discrimination.

Our colleagues should be trained to recognize hidden discrimination. We should think about who have we excluded from the article, who we have forgotten to mention.

The Union of Bulgarian Journalists' and the various European programmes' resources for training younger people should be fully utilized and expanded.

Seminars should be organized in the newsrooms.

The problems and their solutions should be published and distributed in different regions. The Union should carry out local meetings. Not only the journalists, but the media owners and publishers should also be invited to these encounters.

A European journalistic forum should be created in order to facilitate communication and exchange of practices.

SUMMARY

Challenges

- ✓ Facing the same problem the journalism is facing as a whole – same in all forms of journalisms
- ✓ Cliché and stereotypes need to be taken into account
- ✓ A lack of analysis in news reporting – most sport journalists only provide a superficial report, no investigative reporting in sport
- ✓ Economic independence of the media – don't dare to challenge the media owner

- ✓ The ethical code is not being made aware among journalists
- ✓ The increasing commercialisation of the media that affect the media agenda (i.e. what is seen as news); 90 per cent of the newspapers in Bulgaria are private; highly commercial – who decides the news agenda; Media owners has no relationship or interest in journalism; journalism is a business
- ✓ Needs of transparency of media ownership
- ✓ No time for training for journalists during times of crisis

Suggestions

- ✓ See the problem as social and economic problem as a whole not as a racial problem or a particular group in society
- ✓ If there are rules, these rules should be accepted by the society as a whole
- ✓ It should be compulsory for journalism students to learn the ethical code
- ✓ Make editors and publishers to commit to enforcing the ethical code
- ✓ Try to present two independent sources and check their sources
- ✓ The ethical code should be part of the contract with journalists and media organisations
- ✓ Young graduates from journalism school tend to enter the career of PR, ads agency where offer better economic conditions
- ✓ Bulgarian media law (upcoming) – has the legal power to protect the professional rights of journalists that allow them to be free from the editorial control of media employers
- ✓ Training courses for journalists have to be implement on ethics, diversity and non discrimination,
- ✓ Journalism schools should teach students issues on ethics
- ✓ Union to set up training and seminar on discrimination issues
- ✓ Reinforcing existing ethical codes among journalists, editors and newsroom
- ✓ Publish decisions of the ethic committee on the website of the journalists unions of Bulgaria
- ✓ Monitor best practices in other European countries, e.g. newsroom practices, lawsetc
- ✓ Similar activity should be held in other part of Bulgaria and should involve the employers, editors and publishers
- ✓ To set up a European journalists forum
- ✓ Asked the union to create an independent media

APPENDICES

ETHICAL CODE OF THE BULGARIAN MEDIA

Adopted by major Bulgarian media outlets and organizations of the Media Support Programme of the European Union in November 2004.

In accordance with the Constitution of Bulgaria and its international human rights agreements;

Confirming that everyone has a fundamental right to freedom of expression, access to information, protection of personal dignity and privacy, and life in safety and security;

Confirming that the media are guaranteed the freedom to operate without any form of censorship;
Realising that to balance these rights, the media have both freedoms and responsibilities, and rights as well as obligations;

Declaring that our primary purpose in abiding by the letter and the spirit of this Code is to honour the right of the public to receive and distribute reliable information in order that they can play an active role as citizens in an open democracy;

In recognition of our responsibility to respect these rights, we, as representatives of the Bulgarian media, commit ourselves to the following principles:

1. Supplying the public with reliable information

1.1. Accuracy

- 1.1.1 We shall supply the public with accurate and verified information and we shall not deliberately suppress or distort facts.
- 1.1.2 We shall not publish information we know to be inaccurate.
- 1.1.3 We shall not mislead the public, and will clearly indicate where manipulated texts, documents, images and sounds have been used.
- 1.1.4 We shall distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and facts.
- 1.1.5 In presenting analysis and comment we shall seek to ensure that a diversity of opinions and views is represented.
- 1.1.6 In reporting on a controversy we shall seek to ensure that parties concerned have an opportunity to state their position.

1. 2. Corrections

- 1.2.1 We shall publish a clear and appropriately prominent correction when it can be demonstrated that inaccurate or misleading information has been published, and provide an apology if necessary.
- 1.2.2 We shall provide a right of reply to individuals and organisations directly affected by inaccurate or misleading publications.

1.3. Sources

- 1.3.1. We shall seek to verify information before it is published, as we look for and use different sources and where appropriate indicate its provenance.
- 1.3.2. We prefer to use identified sources rather than anonymous sources whose honesty and reliability cannot be assessed by the public.
- 1.3.3. We shall protect the identity of confidential sources of information.
- 1.3.4. We shall always indicate where information has not been confirmed.

2. Acquisition and presentation of information

2.1 Identification

- 2.1.1. We shall gather information by fair and legal means.
- 2.1.2. We shall only make use of subterfuge, hidden cameras, microphones or other special equipment, or obscure our professional identity, if there is no other means to obtain information exceptionally important to the public interest; we shall indicate such methods in the story.

2.2 Harassment

- 2.2.1. We shall not use threats, force or harassment to obtain information or images.

2.3 Privacy

- 2.3.1. We shall respect the inviolability of everyone's private life.
- 2.3.2. We shall avoid publishing photographs and recordings of individuals taken outside public places without their consent.
- 2.3.3. We shall not add to the distress of people affected by tragedy or crime and report such matters with sympathy and constraint.
- 2.3.4. We shall respect the wish of people to grieve in private.
- 2.3.5. Only an exceptional public interest would justify the media's intrusion into private and family life.
- 2.3.6. According to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, public figures can expect a lesser degree of privacy; however, information about their private life can be disclosed only if it is in the public interest.

2.4 Children

- 2.4.1. We shall demonstrate special responsibility in respecting the rights of children, including their right to be heard.

- 2.4.2 We shall not take advantage of children's innocence and trust.
- 2.4.3 We shall not publish information or photographs about the private life of a child unless there is an overriding public interest.
- 2.4.4 We shall protect the identity of children involved in or affected by tragedy or criminal activity, in case it might turn out to be harmful.
- 2.4.5 We shall seek to avoid interviewing children without the consent of an appropriate adult.

2.5 Discrimination

- 2.5.1 We respect everyone's right to live in safety and security, and we shall avoid publishing material that incites or encourages hatred, violence or any form of discrimination
- 2.5.2 We shall not refer to a person's race, colour, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, mental or physical condition, unless it is of importance to the meaning of the story.

2.6 Crime and brutality

- 2.6.1 We shall respect the 'assumption of innocence' and will not describe someone as a criminal prior to their conviction.
- 2.6.2 If we identify a person as being charged with a crime, we shall also make known the outcome of the trial.
- 2.6.3 We shall treat with caution the identification of victims and witnesses of crime, especially in cases involving sexual assault, unless they give consent to being identified.
- 2.6.4 We shall refrain from glorifying or unnecessarily sensational reporting about crime, violence and brutality.
- 2.6.5 We shall be careful not to be used as a platform by those who promote, incite or use violence; we shall report on their activities with due constraint and only if there is a clear public interest.

2.7 Decency

- 2.7.1 We shall respect good taste and decency in our publications.

2.8 Suicide

- 2.8.1 We shall avoid publishing details of suicide methods, in order to limit the risk of imitation.

3. Editorial independence

- 3.1 We shall not be susceptible to political or commercial pressure or influence.
- 3.2 We shall maintain a clear distinction between editorial decision-making and commercial policy of the media.

- 3.3 We shall maintain a clear distinction between editorial content and marketing, advertisements or sponsored materials.
- 3.4 We shall not accept any personal, political or financial inducements that may impact upon our ability to provide the public with accurate information.
- 3.5 We shall not use our access to information as a means of obtaining personal gain, especially in respect to information about business performance and financial markets.
- 3.6 We shall avoid covering stories where we have a direct personal interest, or shall at least declare our personal interests where it is relevant.
- 3.7 We shall respect the right of individual journalists to refuse assignments, or to be identified as the author of publications which would contravene the letter and spirit of this Code.
- 3.8 We shall not pay sources for information but where payment is considered necessary in order to obtain information that the public has a right to know, we shall make clear that payments have been made.

4. Relations between and within media

- 4.1 We believe that relationships between different media outlets and between media professionals should be characterised by mutual respect and fair competition in order to preserve the integrity of the media.
- 4.2 We believe that the public has a right to know who owns and controls media outlets.
- 4.3 We consider all forms of plagiarism to be unacceptable in all circumstances.
- 4.4 We shall respect copyright and the terms of copyright agreements.
- 4.5 We shall always acknowledge the source of short extracts of material from other media which may be used without express permission.
- 4.6 We shall only reproduce longer extracts or complete materials from other media with prior permission and with the acknowledgement of the author and media.
- 4.7 We shall support media colleagues when they are unfairly attacked or criticised; however, professional solidarity should not be an excuse for suppressing or distorting information.
- 4.8 We believe that individual journalists who respected the letter and spirit of this Code yet are charged in a court by third parties should be supported by their media outlet.

5. The public interest

- 5.1 Infringement of the terms of this Code may only be justified where it can be clearly and fully demonstrated that publication serves the best interests of the general public.

5.2 For the purposes of this Code, information 'of public interest' should not be confused with information which is 'interesting to the public'.

5.3 A publication is in the public interest only if:

- It protects health, safety and security;
- It helps the prevention and disclosure of serious crimes and abuse of power;
- It prevents the public from the danger of being seriously misled.

Media, Diversity & Sport - Key Figures!

In Europe, only a quarter of news subjects are women, even though they account for over half of the European population (GMMP, 2010)! While immigrants represent around 10% of the EU population (*Eurostat, 2011*) migrants and ethnic minorities represent less than 5% of the main actors in the news in Europe (*Ter Wal, 2004*). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people represent roughly 6% of the population of the United Kingdom but account for less than 1% of the population seen on TV. 20% of the British population is disabled but less than 1% is represented in British TV (*CDN 2009-10 Progress Report*).

Through the sources they use, the subjects they select and the treatment they choose, the media influence the agenda (what to think about) and public perception (how to think) of contemporary debates. This is why the Council of Europe considers truly inclusive information - where everyone can participate as witnesses, players, producers etc. - to be crucial for social cohesion and democratic participation. But today, too many people are still excluded from public debates!

The MARS - Media Against Racism in Sport - EU / CoE joint programme chooses to focus, though not exclusively, on sport because it is considered as an important area for building social cohesion as it is also a major sector of investment in the media industry. However, sport media coverage does not reflect social and cultural diversity and does not ensure equity for all. Only 5% of press articles cover cultural and social aspects of sport; 40% of all sport articles refer to only one source and 20 % refer to no sources at all; female athletes have four times more chances to be covered by a female journalist rather than a male one but less than 5% of sport news and stories are made by female journalists (*Play the Game, 2005*)!

Building upon standards set by various Council of Europe bodies on media pluralism, expression of diversity and non discrimination and the outcome of the 2008-10 CoE's antidiscrimination Campaign, the MARS - Media Against Racism in Sport - EU / CoE joint programme aims at considering non discrimination and expression of diversity as an ongoing angle of media coverage.

Through this approach applied to sport coverage, MARS wants to encourage innovative modes of media content production that could be reproduced in all media sectors and used by any form of media coverage. By stimulating media cross-practices in the field of training, ethics and production, MARS aims at implementing an inclusive and intercultural approach to media content production. To achieve these outcomes, the MARS programme offers media professionals (journalism students and trainers, journalists, media managers, etc.) to participate in **National and European Media Encounters** and **Media Work Exchanges** conceived as first steps towards a European media network against racism and for intercultural dialogue.

More – www.coe.int/mars !