



JOURNALISM & DIVERSITY

ETHICS & DEONTOLOGY UNITS

PRACTICAL SHEETS FOR JOURNALISTS & MEDIA MANAGERS

UNIT 2 - EUROPEAN NEWSROOMS

HOW TO RENDER DIVERSITY FROM AN ETHICAL STANDPOINT?

MARS - Media Against Racism in Sport

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Sport is one sphere of society where diversity takes the most apparent or visible forms. The media treatment of sport should allow their portrayal, and yet here too the coverage lacks diversity. Sportsmen and sportswomen are from quite diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but neither receives as much exposure as sport experts or analysts. In Europe, the society to which the media gives a say is overwhelmingly white, male, economically active and in the higher socio-occupational categories.

Think “diversity” whatever the subject dealt with - Media balance consists in mainstreaming more diversity into journalistic treatment, whatever the subject and classification.

This provides an answer to the ambition of the media to be a mirror of the society in which they move, while being as objective and neutral as possible. In fact this seeming neutrality, in causing over-exposure of certain categories at the cost of making others invisible, conceals actual elements of diversity.

Explicitly target the types of diversity - Restoring media balance consists in larger endorsement of topics directly related to forms of diversity.

Including features of diversity irrespective of subject and fostering equal access to the media is a goal to be complemented by a significant increase in topics that deal directly with considerations of diversity.

Encourage critical reviews of coverage - Journalistic work must be constantly analysed by journalists themselves to avoid replicating or accentuating society's inequalities.

Reporting facts is necessary but remains insufficient. Information is an already mediated, manufactured object. Built to professional and aesthetic standards, information is also interpreted by a recipient. A media world without diversity breeds legitimization and normalisation of society's inequalities.

MISSING DIVERSITY - Journalism can help emphasise missing features of diversity when their absence is precisely a feature of reality.

Example: In the major controlling bodies of European sport, the over-representation of men conforms to a certain social reality but does not reflect the diverse facets of European societies.

MISSED DIVERSITY - Journalism can systematically reveal the facets of diversity bypassed when this reality is eclipsed by media overexposure of other more sensational or more readily conveyed aspects.

Example: In France as in many European countries, a live coverage in an urban amateur football club only showing white players would be an illustration of missed diversity since these clubs have qualified football players of far more diverse ethnic and cultural origins, like the national professional teams moreover.

FOCUS SPAIN

For the advancement of equality and diversity

To Spanish journalists, the question of diversity is closely associated with that of gender equality, especially where sports journalism is concerned. In Spain, as often happens elsewhere, sports editorships are separate from news desks and this may cause discrepancy between general-interest journalists' appreciation of equality and diversity issues and sports journalists' reproduction of numerous sexist stereotypes.

To raise awareness of equality and diversity issues, recommendations target different audiences.

Recommendations regarding the press profession and enterprises

- In colleges of journalism and universities, place more emphasis on diversity and equality, particularly in specialist studies in sports journalism.
- At editorial level, encourage the inclusion of sport sections in newsrooms, under instructions to abide by the same ethical standards.
- In the managements of press enterprises, pay more attention to diversity in recruitment and access to editorial responsibilities, particularly as regards feminisation of certain areas such as sports journalism.

Recommendations to increase distributors' responsibility towards the public

- More marked assertion by press enterprises of their commitment to equality and diversity, expressed particularly by the appointment of a mediator able to entertain the grievances of minimised groups.
- In the programmes, it behoves the media to avoid spreading stigmatisation and stereotypes by posting SMS messages and "spontaneous" calls that may be racist, xenophobic or sexist.

Recent or requisite initiatives

The Ethics Commission recently created by the Federation of Associations of Spanish Journalists (FAPE) is regarded as a positive move that makes for greater social diversity and more responsible journalism. This body might draft and distribute a practice guide, inspired and underpinned especially by the European networks of journalists committed to diversity. Another initiative desired by Spanish journalists: creation of a European OBSERVATORY under the aegis of the European institutions for all-round monitoring of equal access to the media for all members of both sexes.

FOCUS BULGARIA

Getting away from ethnocentrism

Above and beyond the question of explicit racist discrimination, the chief difficulty identified by Bulgarian journalists is ethnocentrism. To register the different points of view and offer diversified treatment of information, journalists can:

- Avoid taking up or conveying commonly shared prejudices and stereotypes concerning minorities, for example by using considerations of an ethnic or cultural kind to account for social problems.
- Avoid approaching economic and social problems as specifically relating to a given minority, but deal with them as concerning Bulgarian society perceived as a whole.
- Diversify the choice of subjects and the handling of information through inclusion of current affairs topics that concern minorities.

Observe the stipulations of the Ethical Code of the Bulgarian journalists' union which specifies in Article 2.5:

- Respect everyone's right to live in safety and security, and do not incite hatred, violence or any form of discrimination.
- Do not mention characteristics linked with "race", colour, religion, cultural origin, sexual orientation or mental or bodily health of persons except in cases where it bears directly on the events reported.

Observe the stipulations of the Ethical Code of the Bulgarian journalists' union which specifies in Article 2.6:

- Take care not to be made the mouthpiece of people promoting, inciting or perpetrating violence;
 - Only report the activity of such persons and groups if this is of major public interest.
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