

Extract from ‘Getting the facts right: Reporting ethnicity and religion - A study of media coverage of ethnicity and religion in Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom’ (2012). MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE

The recommendations that follow are grounded in the ideas generated by the interviews with journalists and editors and analysis of case studies. They are aimed to support ethical, **value based journalism** able to be followed by all professionals, regardless of situation and context.

Variations in journalism cultures, identified in newsmakers’ responses to the questions related to journalistic norms and values, as well as particularities in using different journalistic tools when reporting on religion and ethnicity, should not prevent journalists from applying universal ideas of **good, accurate, fair, balanced, responsible and trustworthy journalism**. Five basic journalism duties should be kept in mind:

- **Duty to society:** telling the truth, providing equal access to media, being responsible, respecting privacy, adhering to the normative set of journalism rules and values.
- **Duty to audience:** providing information necessary for the functioning of democracy and making the significant interesting.
- **Duty to news organisation:** following company policies, striving to give the news organisation a competitive edge, protecting sources of information.
- **Duty to colleagues:** helping out with information, protecting colleagues from unfair treatment.
- **Duty to her/himself:** acting according to their own integrity and conscience.

The following list contains some of the good practices and points of action mentioned by the interviewees – regarding covering religion and ethnicity:

What can journalists do?

- Get to know anti-discrimination legislation.
- Use a dialogue-oriented approach.
- Use a broader network of expert sources.
- Provide background information.
- Put facts in context.
- Investigate documents in the public domain (archives, libraries, local offices).
- Interview people with knowledge.
- Portray people as human beings instead of representatives of religious or ethnic groups.
- Avoid negative labels.
- Separate facts from opinion but treat opinion as relevant.

What can editors do?

- Organize in-house training for journalists.
- Invite members of religious and ethnic groups to come to the newsroom.
- Encourage more senior journalists to support younger colleagues in these matters.
- Support best journalism practice.

- Create a culture of tolerance within the newsroom.
- Work with human resource departments to take into consideration newsroom diversity.
- News outlets who do not have internal editorial guidelines should be encouraged to adopt them.

What can newsmakers expect from Civil Society Organisations?

- Regular updates on activities in the field.
- Professional advice in matters of disputes.
- Support in gaining background information.
- Support in finding sources for information.
- Functioning as an advisory panel for the most contested issues.
- Providing ideas for stories that highlight the issues of religious and ethnic groups.

What can newsmakers expect from universities?

- The development of inclusive journalism curricula.
- Organising more post graduate training for mid-career journalists.
- Introducing courses on journalism ethics if they don't exist already.

What can journalists' unions and associations do?

- Adopt and promote an ethical code for journalists.
- Organise training and workshops for journalists on issues related to tolerance, religion, security policy, rights of minorities, and reporting on vulnerable groups.
- Establish an equality council or a working group within the union to deal with the issue. The National Union of Journalists of the United Kingdom and Ireland established a Black Members' Council to campaign for race equality in the union and in the workplace and to tackle racism in the media.
- Develop guidelines on reporting on race, migration and religion.
- Develop a specific charter or code of conduct for reporting on race, migration and religion. In 2008, the Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana developed the Rome Charter, a code of conduct for reporting on asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants in the media.
- Initiate campaigns and debates among journalists, unions, publishers and civil societies.
- Adopt and enforce a conscience clause in the collective bargaining agreements for journalists.
- Develop social dialogues with media organisations/owners to defend ethical and quality journalism.
- Examine the case for establishing a press council, or question the value of the existing one.
- Support public discussion on the work of journalists and, for instance, media coverage of issues related to tolerance, religion, security policy, rights of minorities and vulnerable groups.
- Establish an Ethics Commission to discuss cases and review the code of ethics. The Lithuanian Journalists' Union established an Ethics Commission to discuss cases where there is a breach of the code of ethics; and to review the code of ethics on a regular basis.