

# Newsroom guidelines

Trust is the basis of all journalistic communications. This is as true today as when Radio Luxembourg started broadcasting regular news programmes on 15 March 1933. Today, news and magazines are an essential pillar of RTL Group's broadcasting, in terms of both quantity and quality. Each day, tens of millions of people use them to learn about events in their region, within Europe, and around the world. Everyone involved in creating these programmes has a journalistic, ethical and social duty. We are backed in this by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which guarantees the freedom of expression and information, while emphasizing human dignity and the right to the integrity of the individual. Although every newsroom follows its local laws and ethical codes, we created the following guidelines to provide a framework for action, for our daily work, and for the more challenging cases our editorial staff regularly encounter.

## Principles of reporting

### We are fair and impartial

- We are committed to human dignity and truthful, impartial reporting.
- We carefully check our sources for trustworthiness. We always try to hear and report both sides of the story.
- We never use unfair or illegal methods in our research, and we are always responsible in our treatment of personal and intellectual property rights, and when using social networks for research purposes.
- Political interference with our reporting is absolutely ruled out.
- We never discriminate on the basis of gender, disability or affiliation with a group, whether ethnic, religious, social or other.

## Personal rights

### We act responsibly

- We act responsibly when reporting on matters that can be traced to individuals, especially in the case of victims of crimes and people who are in court and/or accused of a crime. This applies for underage offenders in particular. As a general rule, the presumption of innocence applies.
- We proceed with caution and in a coordinated manner in cases where pictures of a town, a street or a house could enable the identification of individuals.
- We respect people's private lives, privacy and their informational self-determination as part of their right to human dignity.

However, if the behaviour of an individual is of public interest (i.e. welfare of the general public), it can be reported – this can also include, among others, the private lives of politicians, government officials, civil servants, business leaders and other persons of particular public interest. In the case of reporting that identifies individuals, the public interest should outweigh protecting the person concerned; mere sensational interest is no

justification for reporting that identifies individuals. If anonymisation is required, it must be effective and we should ensure the editorial protection of privacy.

- We handle potentially defamatory stories carefully and check them with great diligence.
- Pictures of minors should only be broadcast with the agreement of the parents or guardians. Even if the parents approve the broadcast, we may decide not to proceed if this negatively impacts the child's wellbeing.
- We treat archive materials with care, and carefully consider whether we can still show the persons documented with certain opinions or in certain situations.

## **Image selection**    **We are cautious in showing violence and victims**

- In reporting about acts of violence, our main focus is on the fact that physical violence is not a legitimate way to resolve conflicts. Pictures and scenes that involve acts of violence, are selected with a sense of responsibility and only used if they are of public interest.
- We only show real violence in a topical, journalistic context. In selecting the pictures, we take care to ensure that they do not glorify violence.
- We are fully aware of the special responsibilities of live reporting.
- We handle the research of text, images and graphics with great care and check their veracity when dealing with social media sources. We always label unconfirmed news, presumptions and rumours accordingly. Especially during emergency situations such as terrorist attacks we treat our sources with great care.
- We only show the dead bodies of persons of contemporary historical interest if there is public interest in the individual's death, and if there is a newsworthy event to be covered.
- We don't show people at the moment of their death. The only conceivable exceptions are persons or moments of contemporary historical interest.
- We are aware that underage victims of crimes require special protection.
- We handle pictures of victims with sensitivity and discretion.

## **Protection of minors**    **We handle the personal rights of minors with sensitivity**

- We commit to a sensitive and responsible treatment of the personal rights of children.
- Prior to publishing any content that could violate the personal rights of the minors shown (for example, photos of victims, underage criminals), the editorial departments carefully assesses whether there is genuine public interest in the topic, and how high the interest is.
- We are aware that sexual images and content can affect minors if it is beyond their level of development and cannot, therefore, be put into context by them.
- We are aware that the depiction of physical and psychological violence, of threatening situations, or of victims of accidents or disasters, can trigger lasting and unmanageable anxiety in children.

We are, therefore, cautious about selecting such content, and put it in context. We are exceedingly sensitive about using stylistic techniques such as replaying, slowing down and zooming in on the sequences.

## Truthful reporting

### We don't stage reality

- We don't use fictional or scripted elements in news programmes produced in house.
- If such elements are included in our broadcasts, we will clearly label them.
- We never encourage the givers of direct quotes to make specific statements.
- We clearly label any staged elements and re-enactments in our reports.
- We commit ourselves to the clear separation between editorial reporting and commercial advertising and mark paid advertising as such.

## Message placement

### We are cautious and critical on third party messaging

- We are aware that businesses and lobbies try to take advantage of, and influence, daily reporting for their own gains. For this reason, we are especially critical in our evaluation of third-party video and audio input.
- When we include experts' opinions in our reporting, we critically examine whether they are pursuing a specific goal with their statements and remarks.
- If we decide to use journalistic content that we were not involved in creating, or did not commission, we treat the material with particular scepticism.
- In our daily reporting we avoid highlighting or mentioning products and brands that are not directly connected to the content of our reports and presentations. This includes everyday products, as well as consumer goods and clothing.