



Reporting
Diversity
Network



Guidelines for
professional, credible,
and ethical reporting on
the LGBTIQ+ community

The background is a dark teal color. In the upper left, there are two stylized firework bursts made of small, light blue dots. On the left side, there are decorative elements: a large, rounded, olive-green shape, a branch with orange leaves, and a branch with green leaves.

The Reporting Diversity Network findings indicate that the LGBTIQ+ community is often exposed to hate speech. After gender and ethnicity, sexuality is the third most targeted identity in the Western Balkans media. The media often contribute to this, and even act as a generator of hate speech. However, they also play a significant role in educating and informing citizens, thereby reducing stigma and prejudice.

This is why we have prepared guidelines that can contribute to better reporting on topics important to the LGBTIQ+ community.



When reporting on an event involving an LGBTIQ+ person, ask yourself if it is important to highlight their sexuality and/or gender identity

If it is not relevant to the story, it is unnecessary to label a person as a part of the LGBTIQ+ community and emphasize that part of their identity. Intrusion into someone's private life can be justified only with their consent and if highlighting their sexuality and/or gender identity is in the public interest. Journalists should take into account potential hate speech and discrimination that may arise as a result of their reporting.



Always strive for diversity in your reporting.

In order to credibly represent diverse groups in society, journalists should include the opinions and perspectives of the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as other minority communities, when reporting on social and political issues that do not exclusively concern this community. Additionally, including the LGBTIQ+ community in such reporting will contribute to a better understanding of the specific problems of LGBTIQ+ persons among the public.



The LGBTIQ+ community exists even when it is not Pride week.

Pride is important, but it is not the only topic important to the LGBTIQ+ community. Report on these topics even when LGBTIQ+ rights are not in focus due to events such as Pride week and the Pride parade being held. Civil society organizations that advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons are always a good source of ideas for topics and interlocutors. In this way, you can contribute to a better understanding and inclusion.



**Words matter.
Use appropriate terminology.**

Some terms that are often used in the media (transsexual, homosexuality, transvestite, sex change, etc.) are outdated and do not reflect the reality of LGBTIQ+ people and so can be harmful to the community. Take time to learn the appropriate terminology to use when reporting on the LGBTIQ+ community using the numerous resources provided by LGBTIQ+ rights organizations or by contacting the organisation. By using adequate terminology, the media also fulfill their educational role.



Familiarize yourself with the basic concepts essential to reporting on the LGBTIQ+ community. Gender and sex are not the same, nor are sexual orientation and gender identity.

Accurate reporting on issues affecting the LGBTIQ+ community requires you to understand the basic concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality. Sex refers to a person's physical (biological) characteristics and is assigned at birth, while gender is a socially constructed category that refers to how a person perceives themselves, how they identify and how society perceives them. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth. Sexual orientation refers to a person's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to none, one, two, or more sexes/genders and is independent of a person's gender identity.



Include LGBTIQ+ people in the process of creating content.

Including people from the LGBTIQ+ community in the creation of various media content, will contribute to a more accurate and credible representation of this community, showing the different lives and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people and reducing deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices in society.





Do not publish content that is potentially offensive or harmful to the community.

Think about your story and its impact on the LGBTIQ+ community and society. Do not publish stories that contain stereotypical descriptions, as they may contribute to reinforcing already existing prejudices in society. Also, think about the potential reaction to your story, including reactions in the comments and on social media where hate speech often multiplies quickly. In such situations it is necessary to moderate the comments or in some cases even disable them completely.



Respect the person's identity and the way they present themselves in your reporting, especially their name and the pronouns they use.

In this way, you will show respect and appreciation to the people you are speaking with.





Choose your interlocutors carefully!

When you report on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and the problems they face in everyday life, good interlocutors are people who are a part of the community, activists, and experts from specific fields. Including the "other side" by confronting human rights activists with politicians, representatives of religious communities and other actors who oppose the realisation of human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons creates a false balance in the media. In this way, by trying to be impartial, journalists create space for potential discrimination and hate speech and legitimise often unfounded, homophobic, transphobic, and misogynist attitudes as equal to the position that advocates for human rights.



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