

DECLARATION
OF PRINCIPLES OF
THE JOURNALISM
IN CATALONIA
CODE
OF
ETHICS

PREAMBLE

November 2025

A journalist is a person who has the academic training and/or the professionally accredited experience required to practice journalism. Journalists may work in media organizations, in companies engaged in communication, or on personal platforms. In all cases, they must assume the essential ethical commitments established by the Code of Ethics of the Catalan Association of Journalists. The practice of journalism guarantees citizens' right to information, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 11), the Spanish Constitution (Articles 20 and 105.b), and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia (Article 52).

Code of Ethics

Journalists have the duty to reflect events as truthfully possible, and do so with honesty, independence, responsibility, and critical thinking. Practices that fail to respect this framework fall outside the definition of journalism. A journalist is someone who processes, analyzes, and disseminates information through different channels. Anything that is not truthful cannot be accepted as journalism, particularly in an environment where the dissemination of falsehoods masquerading as news contravenes journalistic practice as defined by the Code of Ethics.

The values that guide journalists also apply corporately to media companies. These entities only fit this definition of journalism if they are transparent about their ownership, committed to the Code of Ethics, and make decisions that serve the public. Likewise, major digital platforms are editorially responsible for the content they distribute on social networks if they are to be regarded as journalism. In all cases, their purpose is not only to inform but also to educate, disseminate, and entertain—always in accordance with truthfulness and the Code of Ethics.

CRITERIA

November 2025

01 REPORT ACCURATELY AND RIGOROUSLY

Journalism professionals are committed to the quest for truth and therefore have the obligation to reflect the reality of events as accurately as possible. They must challenge falsehood, disinformation, and the denial of scientific evidence.

Media outlets must always clearly distinguish between news and opinion, disseminate only diligently verified information, and avoid presenting conjectures or rumors as facts. Opinions expressed by journalists must not contain, nor be based on, false data.

Code of Ethics

02 AVOID HARM CAUSED BY INSUFFICIENTLY GROUNDED INFORMATION

Insulting expressions and inaccurate or insufficiently substantiated data that could undermine the dignity of individuals or cause harm or discredit to public or private entities must not be used. Special care must be taken with information that may affect vulnerable people and groups.

Journalists must contact the affected parties beforehand to give them an opportunity to respond.

03 CORRECT INACCURATE INFORMATION

The obligation to correct both information and interpretations that are shown to be false or erroneous must be upheld promptly and with treatment and prominence proportional to the mistake. Likewise, media outlets must respect the right of reply when it is requested on reasonable terms.

USE LAWFUL AND DIGNIFIED METHODS
TO OBTAIN INFORMATION

The use of hidden cameras or any other surreptitious or deceptive methods to obtain information, images, or testimony is unacceptable. Likewise, the interception or non- consensual dissemination of private material from mobile phones, electronic messaging, or other communication channels is inadmissible.

Exceptions may only apply when the events or circumstances are of unequivocal public interest and when no other means exist to adequately uphold the right to information.

Paying sources for information contravenes good journalistic practice and is unacceptable when it compromises the principle of truthfulness or could interfere with the justice system.

Plagiarism is unacceptable. Proper professional practices must be applied when using the work of others.

The systematic use of misleading headlines—known as click-bait—undermines information quality and violates the public right to receive rigorous content.

Preamble

CITE SOURCES AND PRESERVE
PROFESSIONAL SECRECY

Sources must be cited to ensure credibility. However, journalists have a moral duty to protect their sources by invoking professional secrecy when necessary. Confidentiality should serve to protect individuals in situations of helplessness or risk, but anonymity must never be used to unjustifiably attack individuals or organizations.

Good journalistic practice also requires appropriate handling of information received under embargo, as well as honoring off-the-record agreements.

Criteria

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BALANCE INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
WITH THE PUBLIC’S RIGHT TO KNOW

Journalists must defend the right to information against any restriction on transparency required by the public interest, especially when sources are public administrations or official bodies. However, individuals and legal entities have the right not to provide information or answer questions. Intimidating or persistent harassment is reprehensible, as is unfounded intrusion into people’s private lives.

Journalists must never accept payments or rewards from third parties to promote, influence, or publish information or opinions. The acceptance of promotional or commemorative gifts must not exceed the strict limits of courtesy, according to the standards established by journalistic organizations.

It is also inadmissible to combine journalism with other paid activities that compromise the principles of truthfulness and independence.

Any form of promotion or advertising deliberately disguised as journalism is inadmissible.

As a general rule, media professionals must avoid any situation of conflict of interest— political, commercial, economic, financial, or familial—that may call their credibility or impartiality into question.

* See the CIC's recommendations on journalists who appear in advertising.

Journalists must not use confidential information obtained in the course of their work for personal gain, regardless of whether it is published or not, nor disclose it to third parties for similar purposes. They must avoid expressing opinions about companies or products in which they have a direct or indirect vested interest. The same principle applies to the gambling sector.

People must be treated with respect and dignity, particularly the most vulnerable. Unnecessary intrusions and gratuitous speculation about their feelings or circumstances must be avoided. Unjustifiably violating the dignity of individuals, verbally or through the use of images, even after death, contravenes journalistic ethics.

In cases of suicide, information must be handled responsibly, treating it as a preventable public health issue that never stems from a single cause. Sensationalism or any language that associates suicide with romanticism or glamour must be avoided, as must specific details about the person, method, or place. Such news should not be highlighted or repeatedly disseminated, and special care must be taken when public figures are involved. It is important to include information on where and how to seek help. If images are used, they must avoid stereotypes and must not reinforce stigma.

SAFEGUARD THE PRESUMPTION
OF INNOCENCE

Any person accused of or under investigation for a crime has the right to the presumption of innocence in all information and commentary related to investigations or legal proceedings. Respect for and protection of this right apply from the start of police action until guilt is proven in a process that affords all due guarantees. Journalists must avoid prejudice and engagement in parallel trials.

PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF MINORS

The identity of minors must not be revealed when they appear as victims (except in cases of homicide or kidnapping), witnesses, or defendants in criminal cases. This is particularly important in matters of high social sensitivity, such as sexual offenses, adoption issues, or children of imprisoned parents. The identification against their will of innocent relatives or close associates of accused or convicted individuals must also be avoided.

As a general rule, minors must not be interviewed, photographed, or filmed without the explicit consent of their parents, guardians, or educators. Nor is it acceptable to cite the public relevance of family members or associates to justify intrusion into their private lives or exploitation of their image.

RESPECT THE DIGNITY AND PHYSICAL
AND MORAL INTEGRITY OF INDIVIDUALS

No person should be discriminated against based on sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, beliefs, ethnic origin, nationality, or social background. Offensive expressions that may incite hatred or violence must also be avoided. Journalists must be especially sensitive to diversity and act with a sense of justice and respect toward affected individuals or groups.

These ethical responsibilities form part of journalists' inescapable commitment to human rights. Journalists have the duty to identify and combat hate speech, which poses a major threat to coexistence, dignity, and democracy.

ANNEXES TO THE CODE OF ETHICS

November 2025

ANNEX A: RECOMMENDATION ON IMAGE MANIPULATION

The ethical limitation on the use of any image in a journalistic context must be the commitment to uphold Criterion 1 of the Code of Ethics, namely, to capture visual reality as accurately as possible.

Confusion must be avoided between photojournalism, photo-illustration and realistic images and deepfakes generated by artificial intelligence (AI). Photojournalism and photo-illustration, as their names suggest, are of photographic origin and are created using cameras.

1. PHOTOJOURNALISM

In the field of photojournalism, manipulations are not permitted by any technological and/or manual means when they alter the visual information contained in the original real-life scene captured by the camera. That is: adding, removing, shifting or modifying any element of the original real-life scene.

In photojournalism, authorship of the photograph, the date, the location and any relevant identifying elements must always be stated, unless doing so would compromise the safety of sources. This point is particularly important in the use of archive images. All published archive photos must be credited in terms of authorship/archive. This may be important information for the audience.

2. PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION

In the field of photo-illustration, only those images that clearly serve to explain a specific concept may be used, and they must not be presented in a misleading way as documentation of newsworthy facts or people.

Code of Ethics

A photo-illustration:

- Must be based on a verifiable photographic source taken with a camera. In exceptional cases, several photographs may be combined in a photomontage, provided this is evident and does not alter the facts.
- Must have a clear credit line that explicitly states it is a photo-illustration, as this is important information for the viewer.
- Is subject to the same ethical principles as photojournalism; therefore, truthfulness and informational honesty must prevail over any other criterion when deciding on its publication.

3. AI-GENERATED IMAGES

AI-generated images with a photographic or realistic appearance are the result of manipulating multiple images and hence must not be used in journalistic contexts, in line with the rules that expressly prohibit any manipulation of visual information in the field of photojournalism.

Their publication is permissible only when the AI generation of the image is itself the news topic, and always with clear identification of its origin.

Any present or future technology capable of generating realistic or documentary-style images without directly capturing reality must be subject to the same ethical principles. In case of doubt, the determining criteria shall be faithful representation of reality, non-manipulation of images or facts, and respect for fundamental rights.

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ANNEX B

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING INTERNET

The principles of journalistic ethics apply equally to all media and formats without distinction. However, the characteristics of the Internet have given rise to a broad range of situations that raise new ethical considerations for professional practice.

1. EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ethical standards must apply in particular to websites that are digital versions of publications previously existing in other formats, and also to those that originate online but have a masthead and content that lead them to be perceived as news publications.

These standards must also apply to individuals who publish information online independently and who may be recognized as professional journalists, insofar as this activity constitutes their main source of income.

This annex on best practices for information on the Internet also applies to journalists who keep personal blogs or participate in social networks in an explicitly professional capacity.

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2. TRANSPARENCY AND RIGOR

News content must be identifiable as such regardless of presentation format. Distinction between information and opinion is equally required, as is differentiation between advertising and information.

News items must be dated, and it is advisable that links similarly include adequate references to guide users and ensure that the information is contextualized.

- As in other media, immediacy is no excuse for disregarding ethical principles such as reliance on trustworthy sources and the verification of data.
- Neither may information disseminated on social networks propagate unfounded rumours or issue defamatory value judgments.

3. PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Audience engagement enriches the pluralism of online media content and is one of the most defining and innovative features of the new information environment. However, the characteristics of the Internet generate new ethical pitfalls in the relationship between the media and the public.

User comments attached to stories on news websites must be moderated by editorial staff. They must have appropriate mechanisms and tools to prevent the dissemination of offensive messages, affronts to the dignity of individuals or social groups, or content that encourages discrimination, violence or hatred.

Contributions from Internet users must not be anonymous. The publisher must require users who wish to comment and express their opinions to register beforehand, just as no newspaper publishes letters to the editor from people who are not duly identified. Anonymity is admissible when necessary to ensure the dissemination of facts or opinions of clear public interest or vital importance, but the commenter must nevertheless make their identity known to the media outlet.

4. PERMANENCE OF ONLINE DOCUMENTS

The indefinite permanence on the Internet of documents and audiovisual materials that are posted and circulate on the web may create uncomfortable or undesirable situations for the individuals concerned, whether as sources or as witnesses. When they request their removal, the situation requires balancing public interest with individual rights. In any case, invoking the “right to be forgotten” must not lead to the immediate destruction of items that in some way form part of a “general archive” or “living memory” that constitutes collective heritage and may eventually be of interest to historians or social researchers.

As a general rule, requests by individuals or legal entities to destroy digital traces must not necessarily be granted when

the motive is merely a change of opinion, image or other strictly personal considerations.

Nevertheless, the continued availability of certain documents must not give rise to abusive or seriously harmful situations affecting a person’s fundamental rights.

Consequently, editors must prevent or mitigate possible damage caused to individuals who have provided their testimony (image, voice or documents), in view of the distinctive nature of the persistence, ease of access, reproduction and manipulation of materials published online. This responsibility is particularly critical when the individuals affected are minors or young people in vulnerable or high-risk situations, due to the potential use of their online presence.

In any case, the very nature of the web as a global and permanent repository of all types of universally accessible content makes the discretionary, systematic, instantaneous and generalized deletion of material deemed inappropriate or harmful by individuals, companies or institutions practically unfeasible.

5. AUTHORSHIP AND PLAGIARISM

Recognition of intellectual authorship and all associated rights must be respected online just as in any other news medium. The ease of “copying and pasting” provided by digital tools, to the extent that it has become a mechanical, everyday editorial practice, must never serve as a pretext for plagiarism or misappropriation.

ANNEX C

RECOMMENDATION ON PLAGIARISM

Principle 1 of the Code of Ethics calls for thorough verification of all information, while Principle 5 recommends that, as a general rule, sources should be cited. These operating standards form the foundation of journalistic credibility, and public trust depends heavily on their scrupulous application.

Plagiarism is defined as the non-attributed reproduction of a substantial portion of someone else’s work. Doing so may constitute a crime, but it can also seriously undermine the credibility of a journalist or a news organization.

There are various forms of plagiarism, all of which are abhorrent, although they may vary in terms of their seriousness:

- The verbatim reproduction of part of a literary work, a news story, or any other document whose authorship is identifiable and demonstrable.
- The reproduction of photographs or images of any kind that have an identifiable author, even when they may not be subject to copyright.

- The reuse of fragments of interviews or audio clips obtained by journalists from other media, which may have been captured from external broadcasts.

Even when reproduction is not verbatim, non-cited dissemination of information obtained from content published by another outlet may still be considered plagiarism. Citation is especially required in cases of exclusive or highly significant information that another media organization has obtained from sources accessible only to them.

Practices shall not be considered plagiarism when the origin of the information is explicitly cited, or when the information has been obtained directly from the same source or from multiple sources. In digital media, a hyperlink to the cited source must be included whenever one is available online.

ANNEX D

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COVERAGE OF WARFARE OR ARMED CONFLICTS

1. Give a voice to all parties involved to promote dialogue and the means to ceasefire and peace.
2. Speak about the victims and the perpetrators of all sides without dehumanizing them.
3. Avoid adopting the language of the actors in dispute and their allies, and expose their deceptions.
4. Inform about all peace initiatives from whatever quarter they come, institutions or civil society. Particular value should be given to the efforts of social organizations that promote dialogue and provide moral and material support to all victims.
5. Explore the causes and interests of the conflict, the context, and the enduring consequences, both visible and invisible.
6. Avoid to promote warmongering, arms race, xenophobia, racism, or sexism.
7. Reporting on latent or silenced conflicts can contribute to resolve them before violence erupts.
8. When violence ends, coverage should continue to address the conflict resolution process, reconstruction, and reconciliation between the parts, because the conflict itself does not disappear.
9. Sharing constructive experiences in conflict resolution can help others who have not yet found a path toward resolution.
10. Given the complexity and misinformation surrounding armed conflicts, sources must be stated and their stance disclosed.

When journalistic work has been restricted or censored, this also should be explicitly noted.

ANNEX E

RECOMMENDATION ON THE USE OF THE TERM “ILLEGAL” APPLIED TO PEOPLE

The term “illegal,” when applied to immigrants, is incorrect and violates the criteria of the Code of Ethics of the journalistic profession for the following reasons:

- People can never be “illegal,” because using this term would deny a human being their status as a subject with rights.
- The inappropriate application of this label shows contempt for the dignity and self- image of these individuals.
- The exclusive and continued use of this word to refer to migrant workers constitutes discriminatory treatment and fosters stereotypes that criminalise these individuals in the public consciousness.

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ANNEX F

RECOMMENDATION ON THE MENTION OF NATIONALITIES AND ETHNICITIES

The use by audiovisual media of words and concepts related to nationality or place of origin in headlines to identify an individual or group of individuals who have committed criminal acts is discriminatory.

When the media presents such information in a discriminatory context in order to attract audience attention, the result is that citizens develop negative attitudes toward migration and immigrants. The CIC recommends that media outlets act with particular responsibility and rigor when dealing with information or opinions that may give rise to discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, belief, or social or cultural background. In other words, media should avoid generalizations and the labelling of people by differential traits, whether ethnic, religious, economic or social. In any case, if the media outlet considers the nationality of the protagonists to be newsworthy, and in order to avoid fostering discriminatory impulses in the audience, the CIC recommends that this information be mentioned consistently, regardless of where the authors of the reported events come from.

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ANNEX G

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE REPORTING OF SUICIDE

As stated in Principle 9 of the Code of Ethics, suicide is a public health issue that can be prevented and that never has a single cause.

It must be understood that a person with suicidal ideas or who attempts suicide does not usually seek death as an end, but rather as a means of ending their suffering. In this context, media coverage can influence, depending on tone and framing, both prevention and imitation, as well as stigma and blame. For this reason, reporting must be carried out with special responsibility.

1. GENERAL TREATMENT

Suicide must be treated as a preventable public health problem. Reporting should be responsible, treating information sensitively in general terms and avoiding specific details. Care must be taken with the length of the news item and any subsequent coverage, and it is important to avoid giving it prominent place, as evidence shows that repetition and visibility increase the risk of suicide by contagion or imitation.

It is advisable to consult one of the many guides available online to support accurate reporting and communication on suicide. It is important to mention help resources. Coverage should make it clear that seeking assistance is effective and that alternatives exist, while taking into account different contexts and sensitivities.

2. PREVENTION

It is important to include information on where and how to seek help, including helplines and available resources.

It should be remembered that families and people close to the individual may also need support, and that specific services exist.

It may be useful for newsrooms to have a pre-prepared paragraph or graphic resource containing this information, so it can be incorporated quickly into news items.

It is also advisable to report on risk factors, which can serve as warning signs, and on the suffering that a suicide attempt causes for those around the person. Showing this reality can aid prevention by highlighting that death does not end suffering but merely transfers it to loved ones.

3. DETAILS

The causes of suicide must not be oversimplified: they are multiple and complex. Attributing a death to a single factor can convey a distorted image, foster stigma, and generate guilt among those close to the individual. Any simplification in this area can deeply affect people who are already grieving.

For example, stating that someone died by suicide “because of a breakup” or “because they lost their job” assigns responsibility and blame to their former partner or to the person who made a work-related decision.

If there are farewell notes or letters, their details must not be disclosed or shared. Nor should details of the method be given, especially if it is new or unusual, nor explanations of how the death occurred, nor descriptions such as “easy,” “painless,” or “the solution to their problems.”

Details of the location must not be provided, nor should it be portrayed as “idyllic,” or places identified as “popular” or “hot spots” for suicide.

4. LANGUAGE

It is particularly important not to use sensationalist or alarmist language that normalizes, romanticizes or glorifies suicide, or that presents it as a viable, reasonable or understandable solution to problems. Nor should it be presented as a common or acceptable response to difficulty.

Terms such as “suicidal” should be avoided. It is advisable to consider how one would speak about the issue if it were another health problem. For example, just as one says that someone “died of cancer,” recommended expressions include “died by suicide” instead of “committed suicide.” The terms “ideation” and “attempts” are recommended instead of “tries.”

It is acceptable to report that figures have increased, but without exaggerating the scale of the problem. Expressions such as “epidemic,” “unstoppable rise,” “skyrocketing” or “scourge” should not be used. Nor should the death or what happened be glorified or trivialized.

Do not refer to suicide as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt.” Avoid words linked to criminalization or sin, such as “commit.”

Instead, use terms such as “suicide attempt,” “died by suicide” or “took their own life.”

5. IMAGES AND GRAPHIC MATERIAL

Dramatic, sensationalist or explicit images or videos of the person who died, the location, the method or their surroundings in moments of suffering must be avoided. Bear in mind that images of funerals and public tributes may increase feelings of hopelessness among vulnerable people.

If images are needed, it is advisable that they be linked to help-seeking, support or, in general, a positive message.

6. SOURCES AND EXPERTS

Information must be accurate, with verified data from specialized official sources. Regarding testimony, it is preferable to rely on expert opinion and to avoid immediate interviews with

family members or people in mourning. Accounts from individuals who have survived a suicide attempt can also be valuable for understanding suicide and its impacts.

Coverage should make clear that suicide can be prevented, that alternatives exist, and that there are recovery stories among survivors.

7. SENSITIVE GROUPS AND CONTEXTS

Exercise extreme caution in cases involving public figures, minors and vulnerable groups. Certain groups, such as young people, are more susceptible to “contagion.”

Where possible, mention health difficulties and avoid speculation.

8. EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS

In cases of suicide following the commission of a homicide, special care must be taken because these situations attract significant media attention.

9. DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Policies and protocols must be established for social networks, where the same criteria in terms of prudence must apply. In these contexts, where immediacy and brevity are so important, care must be taken not to oversimplify or magnify the issue. Consider whether it is appropriate or not to promote such content and ensure that suitable materials or prepared messages are available.

It is safer not to open comment sections; warnings can be added to indicate sensitive content and, where possible, news items that do not comply with safe-reporting guidelines should not be shared.

ANNEX H

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE REPORTING OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The climate awareness that the media convey to the public is not disseminated solely through specific environmental content, but is constructed through the narrative world projected by the media outlet. For this reason, it is essential that the outlet maintain internal coherence across all the content and channels it uses.

JOURNALISTIC STORYTELLING

- Generate action, not compassion: There is still time to mitigate the consequences of the climate crisis, but this requires disseminating a narrative promoting the possibility of moving beyond the current extractivist model. To avoid stagnation and the sense of impotence that leads to climate fatigue,

media should avoid a single catastrophist framing and the use of strictly emotional or compassionate content only.

- Avoid false equivalence so as not to offer an outlet for climate denialism: The provision of a platform for positions that deny the climate crisis or promote defeatism does not align with ethical impartiality but instead creates a false balance of opinions and amplifies disinformation.
- The consequences of the climate crisis across Catalonia are undeniable. For this reason, substantial effort must be devoted to identifying and covering these local issues in order to ensure territorial representation. Such coverage reinforces the emergency and proximity, in both time and space, of the climate crisis.
- Use visual resources with their own narrative strength: Images and graphic resources—statistics, maps, photographs, videos, etc.—should not merely accompany reports but should be capable of creating an autonomous and solid narrative. In such coverage, portraying lush or idyllic environments should not be an objective. These images are often unrepresentative of reality and foster complacency, which runs counter to the current climate emergency.

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INTERNAL COHERENCE

- Standardize vocabulary: A consistent and shared terminology relating to the climate crisis must be established. Indiscriminate use of certain terms can lead to confusion. For example, referring to the current climate emergency simply as “climate change” is incorrect.
- Train professionals in climate matters: Media professionals who are not specialists in the field must also be able to incorporate a climate-crisis perspective into their coverage. This strengthens internal coherence in climate reporting while encouraging cross-cutting work.
- Label climate-related news clearly: The public must be able to identify that the story they are consuming is framed within the climate domain, both at the moment of consumption and during later searches.

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EDITORIAL FOUNDATIONS

- Break ties with companies responsible for the climate crisis: To ensure ethical coherence and editorial independence, media outlets must cease collaboration with (and the “white-washing” of) entities that promote the exploitation of finite natural resources and the emission of greenhouse gases. They must also actively scrutinise actions and actors that violate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure cross-cutting treatment within coverage and in newsrooms: The climate crisis is inherently cross-cutting due to its territorial impacts, the sectors involved, and the multiple consequences it generates. For this reason, climate-related content must also be integrated across all news areas.

- A human-rights issue: The climate crisis is a matter of global justice, resulting from the overexploitation of natural systems and the violation of human rights. This injustice has historically been perpetrated—as it continues to be—by countries in the Global North at the expense of the resources of the Global South. Media outlets have the responsibility to highlight these unequal relationships.

ANNEX I

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TREATMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN JOURNALISM

Content generated with Artificial Intelligence (AI), or with any other present or future technology, must respect journalistic standards and the principles set out in the Code of Ethics of the journalistic profession in Catalonia. Such content must not compromise news quality or foster disinformation.

Compliance with these criteria is essential to preserving public trust and the social function of journalism.

1. JOURNALISTIC RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility does not lie with the technology itself, but with the people who design it, apply it, or decide to use it.

2. HUMAN SUPERVISION

There must always be human journalistic and editorial oversight, carried out by professionals, at every stage of the production and dissemination of content generated or assisted by artificial intelligence. This supervision must entail assessment of the reliability of sources, verification and contextualization of information, detection of errors, and guarantee of truthfulness.

3. TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is the foundation of credibility. It must be clearly, explicitly and accessibly declared when artificial intelligence has been used substantially in the preparation of journalistic content.

Simply warning that content has been generated by AI does not endorse its ethical acceptability or support its informational value.

Such material must be subjected to the same criteria of truthfulness, rigor and responsibility as any other journalistic content.

4. DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATION

Journalists and media outlets have the duty to prevent the proliferation of AI-generated content that may produce or promote disinformation or manipulation.

They must expose the existence of such practices and warn the public.

5. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS PREVENTION

The quality of data is the foundation of good journalism. Therefore, potential biases present in the AI systems used must be identified, particularly if they exclude minorities or reproduce stereotypes.

The use of AI must not introduce bias, foster polarization or discrimination, or contribute to the spread of hate speech.

6. GUARANTEEING RIGHTS

It must be ensured that content generated using artificial intelligence does not violate rights such as copyright, intellectual property, or the right to one's own image.

In all cases, any content that could infringe people's fundamental rights must be avoided, especially when technologies that may enable deception or impersonation are being used.

7. DEEPAKES AND IDENTITY IMPERSONATION

With regard to images and videos, as indicated in Annex A, deepfakes and other artificially generated realistic-looking content result from processes of manipulation or synthesis using pre-existing materials and therefore do not meet the minimum requirements to be considered valid in journalistic contexts.

In the case of AI-generated or AI-modified audio, the voices of real people must not be used without their consent, especially if they are public or well-known figures.

Under no circumstances should deepfakes, synthetic voices or realistic reconstructions or simulations of audio, images or audiovisual content be used to depict real events or people in journalistic settings.

Their use is only admissible when the AI-generated content itself constitutes the newsworthy event, and is clearly identified as such.

8. CONTINUOUS TRAINING AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Specific, up-to-date and ongoing training in artificial intelligence must necessarily be incorporated into daily work and to should serve to understand its limits and associated risks. AI education should also be included in university curricula.

9. PPERSONALIZATION, PRIVACY, DATA MANAGEMENT AND PLURALISM

Recommendation algorithms used by the media must not isolate users in information bubbles nor hinder access to other views. Pluralism must be safeguarded, ensuring exposure to a diversity of views and perspectives.

Privacy is a fundamental right, and only the personal information that is strictly necessary should be collected, and it must be used transparently. Data must not be shared with third parties without explicit consent.

10. TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY AND JOURNALISTIC VALUES

It is desirable for media organizations to have mixed teams combining technical experts and journalists to design and supervise AI tools.

Developers working for media outlets must understand and apply the ethical principles of the profession. Technical efficiency must be aligned with journalistic values.

In the same vein, it would be advisable for the Catalan Association of Journalists and the Information Council to participate in the regulation of AI in Catalonia.

11. APPLICATION TO FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

Any present or future technology capable of generating content that could be used by the media, whether or not it is considered AI, must be subject to the same ethical and editorial criteria established in this Annex.

The guiding principles must always be truthfulness, fidelity to reality, transparency and respect for fundamental rights.

ANNEX J

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TREATMENT OF DIVERSITY

1. PROMOTE EQUAL TREATMENT

Avoid, as established in Criterion 12 of the Code of Ethics, including in news coverage mentions of ethnic group, skin color, nationality, religion or culture unless it is strictly necessary for understanding the news story as a whole. This prevents the generation of prejudice, stigmatization and stereotypes that lead to discriminatory and racist attitudes.

2. VERIFIED INFORMATION

Information must be verified (Criterion 1 of the Code of Ethics) and sensationalist events, rumors and fake news must be rejected, especially when they are linked to hate speech and racism, which is often spread by pseudo-communicators on social networks. Reporting must be honest, in accordance with the Code of Ethics, and respectful of the dignity of all people.

3. CONTEXTUALIZE RATHER THAN GENERALIZE

Generalizations, black-and-white framing, sensationalism, oversimplification and decontextualized reporting must be avoided in order to offer a broad and plural perspective that fosters a better interpretation of the events.

4. INCLUSIVE AND NON-SEXIST LANGUAGE

As stated in Criterion 11 and in Annexes E and F, improper, discriminatory, stereotyped or reductive expressions must be

shunned, such as acronyms like “mena” for unaccompanied foreign minors or terms such as “illegal,” “invasion,” “avalanche,” etc., when applied to migrant communities. The “us versus them” framing must also be avoided. It is also necessary to highlight the contributions of women, who often get less exposure, and to use non-sexist language.

5. BEYOND BAD NEWS

Negative or sensationalist news should not be amplified. Conflict must not be created or exaggerated, and positive social, cultural and economic contributions should be given exposure. Human stories should be highlighted, rather than relying solely on impersonal statistics that risk dehumanizing a group.

6. DIVERSE VOICES

Promote the plurality of news sources, reflecting the diversity of society. News production should break from routines, giving a voice to people from different groups to express their views on all kinds of issues, especially in local and regional media.

7. USE OF GRAPHIC AND AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

Media professionals must be aware of the importance of the physical placement of information and of the use of graphic and audiovisual material. Images must always be properly sourced and should fit criteria of relevance, avoiding stereotypical or denigrating representations of the people depicted.

8. THE ROLE OF THE JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION

Journalistic mechanisms that support multiculturalism must be improved, promoting continuous training in the avoidance of bias, particularly in areas such as multiculturalism and human rights. Newsrooms must become more diverse, not only because it is socially just, but because it is journalistically necessary for the sake of informational quality and for providing new perspectives on reality.

In Defense of the Ethical Values of Journalism

November 2025

The Catalan Press Council (CIC) is a professional self-regulatory body and an instrument of mediation between news media and the public. Any person or institution has the right to file a formal complaint with the CIC if they believe that the publication or dissemination of a news item violates fundamental principles of journalistic deontology. Since 1997, the CIC has had its own legal personality under the Information Council of Catalonia Foundation (FCIC), of which the Association of Catalan Journalists is the main patron. As the recipient of information, society is represented on the Foundation's Board of Trustees through civic, social, professional, and academic entities.

COMPOSITION AND MORAL AUTHORITY

Code of Ethics

The Councilors of the CIC are individuals of recognized standing and moral authority. Their role is to study public complaints regarding potential violations of the Code of Ethics, which was initially drafted in 1992 and last revised during the 2025 Journalism Congress. According to the Foundation's own statutes, the members of the Council come from the worlds of "journalism, communication, academia, ethics, bioethics, constitutional law, immigration care, the protection of minors, and other fields, by virtue of their knowledge and public standing." Their reputation and diverse backgrounds guarantee the independence of the CIC and ensure a pluralistic and multidisciplinary perspective on the deontological conflicts they analyze. The members of the CIC carry out their duties voluntarily and without remuneration.

SEAL OF ETHICAL COMMITMENT AWARDED BY THE CIC

The CIC Foundation awards a Seal of Ethical Commitment to all media outlets that commit to adopting the principles of the Code of Ethics. The objective is to provide them with a public distinction that shows their readers, listeners, viewers, or followers that they have voluntarily undertaken to report in accordance with professional ethics and to practice journalism as a public service aimed at guaranteeing citizens' right to

free, verified, and truthful information. To obtain the Seal of Ethical Commitment, media outlets must request affiliation with the CIC and express their commitment to the criteria of the Code of Ethics.

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE CIC

Any person or entity can file a complaint with the CIC if they believe a media outlet has violated the Code of Ethics. The Presidency reviews its admissibility and forwards it to the media outlet so it may submit its response in defense of its rights. With this documentation and any other that may be required, the CIC prepares a report and issues a ruling that the media outlets agree to accept. The resolution is communicated to the parties involved and published on the CIC website.

You can file a complaint using the form available at:
cic.periodistes.cat/presentar-una-queixa-online



or by contacting the CIC at:
Rambla de Catalunya, 10, pral., 08007 Barcelona
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cic@periodistes.cat



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