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**Media ethics in professional journalism:**

**Social responsibility of professional journalists**

***Professional journalism as modus vivendi for the news ethics***

Within preamble (introduction part of the legal act) declaration about rights and obligations of the journalists ([Munich, 1971](https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/International-Declaration)) has been stated: “*Responsibility of the journalist towards public is more important than any other responsibility, especially the one towards employers and public authorities.”*

Within the race to attract, shocking information and events, journalists are taking over the roles that do not belong to them. So, “show host plays the role of the judge; journalist-scientist behaves as an expert. From all of it arise some kind of distraction in which everything is warped, and everything is brought down on an illusion of the reality, conducting of power and scientific competition. And everything goes under the name of sensationalism.

New trends within journalism of the short and efficient statements (sound bite) and replacement of the methodical reporting and analyses with *sensationalism and trivialities* in the tabloids, represent troublesome illustrations of the how much the truth is very often exposed to the pressure of the commercial values. But, when media is not devoted to democratic mandate which should service to political and economic system which enable them to exist, then media become dysfunctional and deprive vitality to the system.

Professional journalism has everything that yellow and sensationalism journalism does not have:

1. Accuracy and that is the cancer for sensationalism – with accuracy sensation cannot exist
2. Right to privacy and sensationalism as exactly the opposite – without getting into privacy in the worst was manner, sensationalism does not have news
3. Independence – sensationalism is depended on provocation, half-truth and owners of the tabloids – their wishes and guidelines
4. Conflict of interest – sensationalism abuses all media (including social media) to, through false representation gets the information no matter what, and even openly supporting one of another option within the possible issue of the story. And lose credibility as fair observers when writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as reporters.
5. Transparency – sensationalism has a problem with that – a lot of unnamed sources, pseudonyms and many anonymous sources takes cheap shots at individuals or organizations.
6. Accountability – sensationalism does not serve public interest, as said, but only particular interest of the owners of the purchaser of the information and mislead the public by suggesting a reporter is some place that he or she isn’t.

***Morality and Ethics within sensationalism***

Media self-regulation is the question of freedom. Free media are the pillars of the free and democratic society. Determination of the freedom - combat for the freedom and constant question is that been achieved or lost – are the subjects for the discussion through the centuries. Self-regulations have a vital importance especially for the media because they are watch-dogs of democracy. If certain person or organization have a mission within protection of other people or national achievements and assumes strong moral obligations. Those obligations should be the subject of self-regulations. Regardless which political system is ruling, world codex is based on free will and daily decision we are making.

Self-regulation is also important for media as system that has a power to influence on changes: of mentality, behavior, politics and life. If media would like to be the engine of the changes, it must have enough responsibility to permanently changes and develop.

Automatically, with self-regulations all issues connected with sensationalism disappears because it is *contradictio in adiecto* – sensationalism is all opposite to that – it is organized anarchy of the news.

Also, regulations, through various codes of conducts around journalistic association around the world incourage professional journalist to avoid deadfalls of sensationalism by respecting professional standards and obligations from the codes of conduct.

# All the codes of conduct are close to be similar and I will just mention International Federation of Journalists (Brussels, Belgium) Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists that are adopted Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the [International Federation of Journalists - IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/europe/article/status-of-journalists-and-journalism-ethics-ifj-principles.html).

This international Declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist
2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism
3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.
5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.
6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.
8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following:

- plagiarism;

- malicious misrepresentation;

- calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations;

- acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

1. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognize in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.

All the mentioned does not correspond with sensationalism at all.

Morality and ethics within sensationalism does not exist in a sense of professional standards, but only within the sense of self-proclaimed morality and ethics of the media and journalist that public has the right to know, without respect to any of professional journalistic standards and codes.

Question to think about: Is the social responsibility biggest value of professional journalism?

*Next:* Media ethics in professional journalism: *The World of limited truth*