

The Euronews charter

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Preamble

Editorial freedom and independence

Euronews is an international, multilingual rolling-news channel whose operation is based on the principles of freedom of expression and communication and of editorial independence.

Programme content must be produced without pressure from any national or international institution, government, political party or political or economic pressure group. This obligation of independence, contained in the channel's internal regulations, dictates the conduct of all those participating in the process of preparing editorial content, from news-gathering to broadcasting. In addition, the journalists of Euronews undertake to “reject all forms of pressure and to take editorial directives solely from the directors of News and Programmes” (Declaration of Rights and Obligations of Journalists, 1971).

The Executive Board Chairman of EURONEWS S.A., is by law “Directeur de la publication”.¹ He guarantees the channel's editorial independence and impartiality, and is also the guarantor of its editorial policy, respect for the charter, and respect for the principles of honesty and pluralism of information.

The Director of News and Broadcasting is responsible for implementing editorial policy.

No external influence or pressure may be exercised on the guarantors of the independence or implementation of editorial policy.

Any television viewer can at any time question Euronews, via its website, about its independence regarding its treatment of news. The company publishes an annual report on this website, which does not affect the aforementioned right of reply (see Chapter 2).

Responsibility

Euronews is responsible for the content of all the programming it broadcasts.² “In no event may responsibility [...] be delegated to producers, directors or image suppliers used by [the company].”³ Euronews exercises editorial responsibility over all of its programming. When it broadcasts EVN or agency images, or images supplied by shareholder channels, it remains responsible for what is aired. It keeps control of output in all circumstances.

¹ Art. 6, law of 29 July 1881; art. 93-2/3, law no. 82-652, 29 July 1982 (amended).

² Agreement between the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) and EURONEWS, 1er janvier 2008.

³ CSA release no. 385, 9 February 1999.

Public-service mission

Euronews may accept public-service missions provided that they are in keeping with the spirit and substance of its editorial guidelines and that they come with their own unequivocal editorial guidelines stipulating complete editorial freedom.

1. The company

1.1 A mission to inform from the European angle

Euronews carries out a specific mission of rolling-news television, broadcasting news, features and interviews with a particular focus on political, economic, social, cultural and sports news, 24 hours a day.

As a transnational and multilingual media organisation whose capital is held by shareholders from 21 countries, Euronews takes care to present its news in a balanced and impartial way that does not prejudice the presentation of contradictory debates. In particular, EuroNews scrupulously avoids adopting any national viewpoint and takes a European view of all news, even national news.

Euronews offers a comprehensive view of international current events, and is constantly mindful to place them in historical and geopolitical context. In particular it takes account of Europe's political, social and cultural realities. It proposes, on a non-exclusive basis, all available information that allows a better understanding of the story at the everyday level. Its principles are impartiality and pluralism.

1.2 EURONEWS S.A.

EURONEWS S.A. holds the channel's broadcasting licence. Its capital is held by 21 public television channels in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. All the shareholders are active members of Eurovision.

EURONEWS is a *Société Anonyme à Conseil de Surveillance et Directoire par actions* (joint stock company) governed by French company law.⁴ It is subject to a shareholders' agreement and operates in accordance with the principles thereof. Its special obligations are set out in the agreement signed in 2008 by France's Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel and EURONEWS.

The public-television shareholders supply it with pictures, reports and feature content as part of their own activities, to the highest possible standards of delivery time and technical quality (subject to acquisition by Euronews of rights held by third parties).

1.3 The Advisory Editorial Committee

The Advisory Editorial Committee meets at least three times a year to review Euronews' editorial coverage in areas of tension.

Within the Advisory Editorial Committee is a "Permanent Committee" comprising the President of the Supervisory Board, the President of the Editorial Committee, the Executive Board Chairman and of the Director of News. The Executive Board Chairman of Euronews S.A. may call an emergency meeting of the Permanent Committee. It will meet as soon as possible, or if necessary hold a conference call. It

⁴ Law of 24 July 1966 (art. 118 and following).

has the power to decide on emergency measures to be taken in respect of the right of reply, either by direct action vis-à-vis the complainant or by corrective editorial measures.

2. Respect for human persons and their dignity

Euronews endeavours to protect the dignity of on-air contributors.

21 Respect for differences

Euronews takes care to respect its audience's various political, cultural and religious sensibilities.

It takes care that programmes contain no incitement to hatred on grounds of race, gender, religion or nationality.⁵

It shows no leniency towards discriminatory behaviours liable to expose a person or group of people to hatred or contempt, particularly for reasons based on religion, customs, ethnic origin, nationality, gender or physical or mental deficiency.

22 Respect for suffering

Respect is due on principle for persons, presented in a live or delayed report or debate, who are exposed in their pain arising from their status as a victim of crime or any accident (death of loved ones, missing persons, hostages' families), or who are in personal, psychological, social or economic difficulty.

Euronews abstains from any humiliating portrayal of their distress, except when a video document contains information that is essential to understand the event.

23 Respect for people's private life

Euronews defends respect for people's private life, in accordance with the guidelines passed by the European Union and the Council of Europe, which may be summarised as follows:

“Every person is entitled to respect for their private life”.⁶ This right particularly concerns identity, the home, health, religious convictions, family life, romantic relationships, leisure activities and assets.

In some cases, information on assets and income ceases to be a private issue. The chosen criterion is the information's relevance to the public interest: “Changing behaviour permits, in certain circumstances, the publication of information on the assets of a personality, in particular one belonging to the business world, for the legitimate purpose of informing.”⁷

⁵ Chap. V, art. 22, Directive 89/552/CEE of the Council of the European Communities, 3 October 1989.

⁶ Art. 9, Law no. 70-643, 17 July 1970 (French civil code).

⁷ Tribunal de Grande Instance, Paris, 28.09.1989, Calvet/Canard Enchaîné, doc. no. 004359. Ruling confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights.

The right to private life is applied separately from personal notoriety. It therefore also exists for public figures, even though the media cover their work or their participation in public life.

Euronews takes care that contributors' comments on matters relating to their private life are only gathered with their consent.

The law prohibits the recording or broadcast of a person in or from a private place without that person's consent.

There is however a presumption of consent when the recording is made "in view and in the knowledge of the interested parties, without their having opposed it whereas they were able to do so".⁸

Jurisprudence permits the dissemination of:

- a. pictures taken in public places, on condition that an individual is not isolated (for example, during a demonstration) and that the person filmed is not in a situation relative to their private life;
- b. pictures of a person in the news, on condition that dissemination of their picture is contemporaneous with the facts or debates justifying it, and that it satisfies the legitimate need to inform the public;
- c. pictures of a person with a public capacity or activities, in their professional and public activity and not in their private life.

When the need to inform requires the use of images of dead people, the subject must be treated in a particularly rigorous, sensitive way in order to respect their dignity and the pain of their loved ones.

24 Right to pictures

Any person has an exclusive right to their picture and to the use made of it, and may oppose its dissemination.

Breach of image rights may also result from subversion of the end purpose of the image. The image must not be used with an inappropriate or erroneous comment.

When an adult agrees to answer the questions of a clearly identified reporting crew, it may be considered that the adult agrees to the dissemination of the interview in accordance with the standards set out in this document, i.e. in an undistorted way.

25 Justice

Journalists are neither legal auxiliaries, judges, prosecutors nor lawyers. They are duty-bound to provide information that respects contradictory debate, to cross-check the information, and to reflect the viewpoints of the various participants in a measured, rigorous and honest way.

Reporting is not a substitute for investigation. Judicial decisions must not be presented in such a way as to undermine the authority and independence of the judicial system or to impede ongoing judicial investigations.⁹

When a restriction imposed by the law seems to contradict freedom of expression and the duty to inform, or seems open to interpretation by the courts, journalists must

⁸ Art. 226-1 of the French criminal code.

⁹ Ruling by the CSA, decree n° 2000-419, 11 July 2000.

consult the news director, who will take a decision in consultation with the legal department.

26 Defamation

Euronews undertakes not to damage the reputation or good name of any person unless, prior to broadcast, it holds proof of the allegations and/or respects the constituent elements of good faith as defined by the courts. The channel shall abstain from any defamation, i.e. an “allegation or charge that damages a person's good name or the esteem in which he is held”.¹⁰

27 Corrections

With a view to balance, fairness and respect for persons, it is imperative to provide any complementary information or correction deemed necessary. Important errors must be clearly and quickly corrected on the Euronews website.

28 Right of reply

Any physical or moral person is entitled to a right of reply. The Executive Board Chairman decides, based on proposals submitted by the Director of News, and in accordance with the charter, how to deal with requests for the right to reply. The Executive Board Chairman is solely responsible for determining the manner and most appropriate means for exercising this right, subject to applicable national legislation.¹¹ In the event of extraordinary circumstances, the Executive Board Chairman may decide to convene the “Permanent Committee” of the Advisory Editorial Committee.

The channel shall in particular ensure that the period of time allowed for exercising the right of reply or equivalent measures is sufficient, and that the modalities are such that said right or measures may be exercised in an appropriate way by physical and moral persons residing or based in other member-states.

Requests to exercise a right of reply or equivalent measures may be rejected if it involves a punishable act, if its dissemination engages the civil liability of the television broadcasting organisation, or if it is contrary to good morals.¹²

¹⁰ Art. 29, law of 1881 on press freedom.

¹¹ Euronews articles of association, 16 December 2011, p. 17-18.

¹² Chap. VI, art. 23, Directive 89/552/CEE of the Council of the European Communities, 3 October 1989.

3. Honesty of information

Euronews ensures that the information it broadcasts is honest and independent. It ensures not to damage the accuracy of the information that viewers receive, in the special conditions of rolling news.

3.1 Truthfulness

The information broadcast is faithful to the reality of the facts. It deals stringently with current events, and never uses dishonest methods.

Given the requirement for honesty, uncertain information must be qualified as such or its source must be referred to.¹³

3.2 Urgency

The constant need for pictures, urgent conditions, competition, and increased transmission performance shorten both the time available for reflection and the distance between the event and the person reporting it.

The pressure of events does not waive the requirement to handle information in a stringent way, or, if satisfactory cross-checking cannot immediately be done, by stating the source.

3.3 Explanation, clarity, accuracy

Euronews sets itself the obligation to provide keys to understanding, to simplify the subjects it addresses without over-simplifying them. It supports the presentation of persons and events that form the news with objective, impartial explanations that are accessible to all, while avoiding condescension. The different language versions of the channel's output have the same information content, while observing the specificities of each language. Information is clearly distinguished from comments, opinions and personal viewpoints.

The greatest vigilance about terminology is required. Approximation and value judgements, whether or not they are concealed, must be avoided.

In order to meet these obligations, the Euronews workforce – journalists, managers, technicians, administrative staff – include professionals from its different language areas.

3.4 Neutrality

Euronews journalists derive no benefit from their position by promoting biased or partisan ideas.

The journalists of Euronews do not take sides on an issue and do refrain from making any comments.

¹³ La lettre du CSA, no. 115, April 1999; Euronews/CSA agreement.

When a person contributes to a programme, they must be clearly identified by their titles and role or capacity so that viewers are able to assess the value of an opinion expressed on a personal basis.

3.5 Pluralism

Euronews ensures the pluralistic expression of schools of thought and of opinion. This pluralism is “a guarantee of the full exercise of freedom of communication”.¹⁴

3.6 Around the world

The specific nature of Euronews' mission and its international broadcast reach require that particular attention be paid to its highly diverse range of audiences and of their expectations.

Euronews ensures that its programming reflects the richness and diversity of countries' cultures, institutions, political parties, trends, movements and religions. This respect for pluralism entails not seeking to gratuitously upset sensibilities and convictions. However, this does not mean turning a blind eye to potentially awkward truths. Respecting viewers means treating them as people who need to know the truth and are able to hear it.

¹⁴ “Le pluralisme et les nouvelles modalités de son évaluation par le CSA” (“Pluralism and the new modalities of its assessment by the CSA”. La lettre du CSA, no. 126, March 2000.

4. Newsgathering

4.1 Checking of image sources

With the increase in amateur video sources, particular vigilance is required. Dubious images, presenting a risk of manipulation or whose purpose is to disseminate propaganda, are pre-viewed and if necessary presented with contextualisation and explanation.

When the demands of news and the duty to inform require the live broadcast of images, Euronews only airs images from known, checked and credible sources, such as television channels or agencies with which agreements have been signed.

4.2 Identification

The abundance of sources makes necessary all clarification methods: embedded mention of the footage's status and of the nature of the elements shown.

If necessary, the image must be correctly identified (location, date, time if necessary, archive mention with date of filming). When archive material is aired, it is important to respect the image rights of the persons featured, and to comply with any particular clause or judicial ruling pertaining to these images.

Reconstructions or dramatisations of real-life events must be presented as such to viewers.

4.3 Protection of sources

Some information sources must remain anonymous. Protecting journalists' information sources is an essential condition to ensure that journalists can work freely and for media freedom.¹⁵

“Any journalist questioned as a witness about information gathered while doing their job is free not to reveal its source.”¹⁶ Sources are protected, notably when a witness asks to remain anonymous for their own personal reasons, by any appropriate technical method (blurring, pixellation, voice distortion); this extends to unaired images.

The principle of source protection cannot be invoked to justify defamatory allegations or comments.

4.4 Editing, image reworking

Editing must convey the essence of the information without deforming it. It must look obviously like an edit if no express mention is made of this.¹⁷

¹⁵ Recommendation no. R (2000) 7 by the Council of Ministers to member-states on the right of journalists to not reveal their information sources, 8 March 2000.

¹⁶ Art. 109, French criminal procedure code.

¹⁷ Art. 226-8, French criminal code.

The use of sound or visual illustrations must not misrepresent reality or dramatise or tone down an atmosphere.

The audience must be warned when post-production effects are added to images.

No use shall be made of methods that alter image meaning or content.¹⁸

4.5 Interviews

When a person grants an interview, they give de facto consent to its being edited and broadcast. Unless the channel makes a prior commitment, the interviewee does not view the edited interview.

When an interview or programme is edited, the edit must not alter the comments made or their general meaning, scope, spirit or tone.

A reply must not be transposed so that it seems to have been given to another question.

On-air contributors are informed, as far as possible, of the subject and title of the programme for which they have been solicited, and of the identity and capacity of the other contributors.¹⁹

When an interviewee refuses in advance to discuss a subject that the news requires them to discuss, the question must nevertheless be asked so that the audience is informed of the refusal. If the question cannot be asked or the edit does not allow its inclusion, viewers must be informed of the interviewee's refusal and the interviewee must be informed that their refusal will be made public.

4.6 Vox pops

When use is made of vox pops (interviews with people selected at random in the street and invited to give their opinion on a subject), it is essential not to mislead the viewers as to the competence or authority of the solicited persons.²⁰ Their use must be placed in perspective and sustain no ambiguity as to their status: viewers must not be led to think that vox pops have the value of a survey or that they represent the opinion of a community, nor be abused as to their authority.

4.7 Hidden cameras and microphones

When important information cannot be obtained by conventional means, the investigation may require use of special methods such as hidden cameras and microphones. Use of these methods must be limited by the need to inform the public. Crews must respect the rights and freedoms of the persons connected with the investigation, notably in respect of the right to privacy and image rights. When this method is used, the audience must be informed. In the case of suicide, only its overriding newsworthiness justifies on-air treatment.

The use of the above-mentioned methods is subject to prior approval by the Director of News.

¹⁸ Euronews/CSA agreement.

¹⁹ Euronews/CSA agreement.

²⁰ La lettre du CSA, no. 115, April 1999.

5. Violence and conflicts

Violence is often in the news (wars, isolated small-scale events, etc.). Euronews is careful to reconcile respect for viewers and the obligation to be faithful to reality and report the news as fully as possible.

The channel shall in no way accommodate violence in its presentation, refusing to promote it in any way.

A violent image is only broadcast if it contains information that is essential to understand the event.

5.1 Conflicts

With images of all kinds of conflict, Euronews endeavours not to broadcast them in a way liable to inflame tensions.

Disclosure of information in a country that is unstable or involved in conflict may cause serious reactions. One cannot elevate the withholding of information, nor the notion that all truths are worth telling, to the status of a principle, even at the expense of human lives; one must constantly be aware that certain information is liable to endanger people, and therefore act with the utmost caution.

5.2 Prisoners of war

The Geneva Convention states that prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, insults and public curiosity. They are entitled to respect for their persons and honour, and retain their full civil capacity.²¹

When the need to inform prompts the airing of images of prisoners of war, this must be done with respect for the dignity of the prisoners and for the sensitivities of their families.

5.3 Terrorism and hostage-taking

When a terrorist act occurs, consideration must be given to the fact that the perpetrators of such acts often try to use the media for resonance. However, there can be no taboos or censorship: one cannot pass over information or hide an image because of how one might envisage the consequences of its airing. If the information is proven, no principle can prevent its broadcast.

However, exercising this freedom imposes a greater duty of rigour and honesty. Journalistic work must be extended by explaining and deciphering situations; in addition, special vigilance must be exercised in respect of the risks of disinformation and manipulation.

²¹ Art. 13 and 14, Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, 1949.

6. Individual responsibility

A journalist cannot be forced to act contrary to the principles set out in the European Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Journalists, which is appended to this charter.²² This freedom comes with a number of obligations.

6.1 Impartiality and independence

The credibility of the channel and of its employees are indissociable and interdependent. This depends not only on the rigour and balance of its programming but also on the rejection, by the company and its employees, of anything that may give rise to suspicions of bias.

Journalists must ensure that various interests do not call into question their independence and credibility, and must avoid any situation that could cast doubt on the impartiality of the company and on its independence from pressure groups and ideological, political, business, social and cultural groups.

Journalists must be careful not to establish relationships that could entail complicity with or indulgence towards any power, party or organisation.

6.2 External professional activities

Professional Activities which in principle are authorised (training, moderating debates, etc.) must be declared beforehand to the employer, who may refuse, stating his reasons.

Non-declaration or any false declaration by a professional journalist is an offence. Journalists must not use the notoriety acquired in the course of their work to publicise, outside of their work, any product, organisation or brand.

6.3 Gifts

In no event must journalists accept items or gifts that may compromise their independence.

“A journalist worthy of the name (...) does not take money in a public organisation or private company where his job as a journalist, his influences and connections would be liable to be exploited (...), does not use press freedom for a self-interested purpose...”²³

6.4 Subsidised reports

Journalists cannot accept an invitation for a press trip in France or abroad without referring it to their line manager, who will rule on its appropriateness.

²² Adopted on 25 November 1971 by the representatives of journalists' unions and federations in the six countries that then formed the European Community; by Swiss and Austrian representatives; by the International Organisation of Journalists (OIJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (FIJ). This charter is included in the audiovisual addendum to the collective agreement of journalists in France.

²³ Charter of the professional duties of French journalists, 1918, 1938.

Any report liable to be promotional in nature must be submitted to management for assessment.

7. Advertising and sponsorship

Television advertising and sponsorship are governed by the Euronews/CSA agreement, EU directive 89/552 and French decree no. 92-280 on advertising.

7.1 Duration and display

Advertising messages must be readily identifiable as such and be clearly distinguished from other programming by means of visuals and/or sound. Their duration cannot exceed the levels stipulated by European and French law: nine minutes per hour of airtime, and 12 minutes in a given hour.²⁴ Advertising must be inserted between programmes. It may also be inserted during programmes in a way that does not impair the integrity and value of the programmes and takes account of programmes' natural interruptions, duration and nature, and in a way that does not infringe the rights of rights-holders.

7.2 Respect for human dignity and protection of young people

Television advertising must not:

- a. contain discrimination by race, gender or nationality;
- b. violate religious or political convictions;
- c. encourage behaviour that is detrimental to health or safety;
- d. encourage behaviour that is detrimental to environmental protection;
- e. cause moral or physical detriment to minors;
- f. directly incite minors to buy a product or service by exploiting their inexperience or credulity;
- g. incite minors to persuade their parents or third parties to buy the products or services in question;
- h. exploit the special trust that minors have in their parents, teachers or other persons;
- i. present, for no reason, minors in a dangerous situation.²⁵

7.3 Prohibited sectors

Any form of television advertising for cigarettes and other tobacco products is prohibited. Television advertising for medicines and medical treatments that are only available on medical prescription in the member-state under whose competence their television broadcasting organisation operates is prohibited.

Television advertising for alcoholic beverages must meet the following criteria:

- a. it cannot be specifically aimed at minors and, in particular, portray minors consuming these beverages;

²⁴ Euronews/CSA agreement.

²⁵ Chap IV, art. 10 to 16 & 11, Directive 89/552/CEE of the Council of the European Communities, 3 October 1989.

- b. it must not associate the consumption of alcohol with an improvement in physical or car-driving performance;
- c. it must not give the impression that consuming alcohol promotes social or sexual success;
- d. it must not suggest that alcoholic beverages have therapeutic properties or have a stimulating, sedative or anti-conflict effect;
- e. it must not encourage immoderate consumption of alcoholic beverages or give a negative image of abstinence or sobriety;
- f. it must not emphasise the high alcohol content of beverages as a positive property.

7.4 Sponsorship

Sponsored television programmes must meet the following requirements:

- a. the content and scheduling of a programme can in no case be influenced by the sponsor in such a way as to infringe the channel's responsibility and editorial independence in respect of the programmes;
- b. they must be clearly identified as such, by showing the sponsor's name and/or logo at the beginning and/or end of the programmes;
- c. during the programmes and their trailers, the sponsor can only be mentioned occasionally and discreetly;
- d. they must not encourage the purchase or rental of the sponsor's products or services or those of a third party, particularly by making specific promotional references to these products and services.

Television-news and political-news programmes cannot be sponsored.²⁶ Television programmes cannot be sponsored by physical or moral persons whose business is the manufacture or sale of products, or the supply of services, which it is prohibited to advertise.

7.5 Covert advertising

Covert advertising is prohibited. A covert commercial is the verbal or visual presentation of the products, services, name, brand or activities of a producer of merchandise or of a service provider in programmes when said presentation is effected with the purpose of advertising²⁷ outside commercial breaks and in trailers, with the result of promoting the above.²⁸

The decisive factor is not intention but the observation of undue favour or of promotion. The presence of a covert commercial must be judged according to:

- a. the lack of pluralism in the presentation of products, services or brands;
- b. undue favouring of a product. The channel shall seek a balance when mentioning products and brands;
- c. the frequency of quotation and/or display of the product or brand;
- d. the provision of the address and telephone, electronic or telematic contact details of an advertiser, or of the locations and dates at which the quoted product is available (e.g. on sale from...);

²⁶ Art. 17, Directive 89/552/CEE.

²⁷ Art. 9, French decree no.° 92-280, 27 March 1992.

²⁸ Lettre du CSA, no. 115, April 1999.

e. the lack of any critical perspective.²⁹

²⁹ Lettre du CSA, no. 115, April 1999.