

GUIDELINES

Guidelines for media coverage of Roma community

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Introduction

These guidelines form part of the “No prejudice” campaign¹ promoted by the Federación Nacional de Asociaciones de Mujeres Gitanas Kamira (Kamira Federation National Associations of Roma Women) and have been drawn up with the participation of the following organisations and bodies: Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas Alboreá (Alboreá Association of Roma Women), Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana (National Association of Roma Presence), Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya (College of Journalists of Catalonia), Comissions Obreres (trade union), Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía (Audiovisual Council of Andalusia), Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya (Catalan Audiovisual Council), Federació d'Associacions Gitanes de Catalunya (Federation of Roma Associations of Catalonia), Federación Autonómica de Asociaciones Gitanas de la Comunidad Valenciana (Autonomous Federation of Roma Associations of the Community of Valencia), Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces), Fundació Privada Pere Closa (Pere Closa Private Foundation), Fundació Secretariado Gitano (Roma Secretariat Foundation), Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades (Institute of Women and Equal Opportunities), Mesa per a la Diversitat en l'Audiovisual (Diversity in the Audiovisual Table), Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia (Spanish Observatory for Racism and Xenophobia), Subdirección General para la Igualdad de Trato y la No Discriminación (General Sub-Directorate for Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination), Unión Romaní (Romani Union) and the organisation Women's Link Worldwide, as well as independent activists supporting the rights of Roma women.

This document aims to be a useful tool in training and raising the awareness of media professionals, encouraging fair, decent, real, equal and intercultural coverage of the Roma community while also taking gender issues into account.

The recommendations and good practices contained in these guidelines can be applied both to news reporting and also to fiction and entertainment programmes, as well as advertising.

1 <http://noprejuicios.com/>

The role played by media professionals has become even more important now that the production and circulation of information and news is more immediate, especially online and via social media, which means that less time can be devoted to producing such information.

The media are responsible for creating society's image of the Roma as an ethnic group and their important work in helping to combat stereotypes and prejudices will undoubtedly improve equal opportunities for everyone. In 2015 Romani sources were only consulted in 28.73% of the cases, which means they were not consulted in the remaining 71.27%.²

Particularly serious is the stereotypical image presented of Roma women, who are the main figures in the most frequently consulted news items and reports and therefore highly vulnerable and in need of special protection.

² Report [¿Periodistas contra el racismo? La prensa española ante el pueblo gitano. 2017](#)

Guidelines for media professionals

1. Promote equal coverage and do not refer to the ethnic group unless this is a relevant fact required to understand the information.

This recommendation is especially important in the case of negative news stories since how a person acts is not determined by their ethnic group.

Should the ethnic group need to be identified because the news item refers to the whole community, where this reference occurs in the report is important as it has much more effect on the front page, in a headline or title.

2. Avoid negative stereotypes of the Roma community.

The Roma community is heterogeneous, diverse and constantly developing. It is therefore advisable to avoid associating this community, either explicitly or implicitly, with content related to social conflict, marginalisation, financial insecurity, male chauvinism, illiteracy, violence or criminal behaviour. Attributing negative stereotypes to the Roma community encourages discriminatory and racist attitudes, as well as creating a stigmatised, negative perception of this community.

The media should emphasise the complexity and diversity of Roma society and avoid the two big stereotypes associated with this community today: socially marginalised Roma and artistic Roma.

3. Encourage the dissemination of positive information on the Roma community.

The media play a very important role in constructing society's ideas and perceptions and must therefore help to ensure a more balanced view of the Roma people, promoting social harmony and helping to reduce discriminatory stereotypes through content that informs and shows their situation, advances and development.

To ensure Roma are suitably represented, the media should publicise news items and content on their real lives and culture today, also from a positive point of

view and covering all the different dimensions within a community as diverse as the Roma, whilst also maintaining proper reporting standards. Positive Romani references should be introduced throughout different reports and items.

4. Use the Roma community as a source of information.

One way of normalising the Roma in the media is by including them as a source of information and opinion, not only for news items related to their community but also in news affecting the population as a whole.

Roma society is represented by organisations and entities with their own spokespeople, experts and data. To encourage a wide range of views, these should be consulted as sources of information in addition to the usual institutional sources.

The media should give a voice to everyone involved in the news item to explain the different points of view and positions. When a news item is about a Roma person, an attempt should be made to provide their opinion and allow them to exercise their right to free speech.

It should be remembered that any witness in a report should be referenced with their name and, if applicable, their association, be it professional, social, cultural or of any other type, unless the source explicitly asks to remain anonymous.

5. Avoid generalisations.

Belonging to a particular ethnic group should not be associated with the cause of a specific action by a person. Generalisations should be avoided to prevent particular cases from being perceived as general, as well as avoiding oversimplification. Wherever possible, news items should be reported using a broad, plural perspective in terms of scope and content.

6. Contextualise information.

Provide background information regarding the causes, consequences and scope of the news item to help people interpret the facts better and reflect on them. Particular care should be taken with headlines, highlighted text and the images chosen as inaccuracies and oversimplification sometimes occur due to the need for brevity, leading to stereotypes and clichés.

7. Use inclusive language without negative connotations.

When reporting on the Roma community, normalising language should be used,

avoiding inaccurate, discriminatory or stereotypical terms. Manuals or guides on inclusive language should also be consulted.³

8. Do not sensationalise or over-dramatise news items.

This recommendation applies both to written and audiovisual media. When a report is produced, especially when this is negative, certain rights should be protected such as the right to presumed innocence, data protection, free speech and honour, personal and family privacy and also image rights. The need to uphold these rights is even greater in the case of minors.

Consequently, no overly dramatic, degrading, upsetting or shocking images, videos or detailed descriptions should be used that do not respect people's dignity. Consequently, the tendency for the media to sensationalise information and content should be avoided whenever possible.

9. Exercise caution when choosing and using audiovisuals to accompany information.

As far as possible, any audiovisual resources used, be they images or videos, should promote social inclusion and positive attitudes towards the Roma community and reflect interaction, dialogue and collaboration between Roma and non-Roma people.

Images and videos help to form a collective image which should be seen as normal in society. There should be no systematic use of images that might distort this view, such as pictures of slums or dilapidated housing, situations of drugs or violence or street children. Conversely, the Roma community should be shown living in harmony with the rest of society (hire-rise homes, jobs, school, leisure activities and sports, etc.).

Images and videos should be chosen that are directly related to the news item and the people in it and any archive images should be relevant and duly identified. As far as possible, any texts cited or audiovisual material used that contains racist or discriminatory images, expressions or connotations regarding the Roma community should be accompanied by the author's name and the context in which they were made or recorded.

3 A Guide to inclusive language is included with these GUIDELINES as an appendix.

When reporting on extreme situations, such as tragedies or conflicts, great care should be taken and general shots used rather than close-ups, which are more invasive and dramatic.

It is essential to request the specific consent of the people appearing in a news item when obtaining images or videos that might violate their right to privacy.

10. Take care with the placement of information on the Roma community.

The people responsible for physically positioning textual and graphic information in news items have an overall view of the content. Regarding news items on Roma people, placement should be taken into account to ensure these are not limited to sections on society, crime or culture but also include other sections such as education, science, research, sport, politics, etc. Note should also be taken of the other items placed in the same space, ensuring that items on the Roma community do not appear next to negative news items.

11. Incorporate the gender perspective in information on the Roma community.

The Roma community is hardly represented in the media at all but Roma women are even more invisible. Today, Roma women are taking on an increasingly active role as spokespeople for their community and the media should incorporate Roma women and their opinions as a source and key figure in reports.

12. Use humour responsibly in relation to the Roma people.

Humorous fiction and entertainment programmes tend to resort to generalising, stereotypical content to represent groups of people. The fact that they are humorous does not justify insulting or offending a specific community or attributing degrading or criminal activities to them, since such behaviour reinforces the community's negative perception in society. Media professionals and audiovisual production houses are advised to use humour responsibly in relation to the Roma people.

13. Normalise the presence of Roma characters in fiction.

Roma characters should be included in fictional audiovisual works, both in leading and supporting roles, and such characters should be represented as normal, without resorting to negative or supposedly positive clichés or stereotypes.

Guidelines for media companies

1. Exercise corporate responsibility regarding any opinions or comments that violate fundamental rights.

The dissemination of discriminatory, racist or xenophobic opinions and comments should be eradicated from the media, not only in news, fiction and entertainment but also in opinion-based genres (articles, debates, discussions, etc.). Particular care and attention should also be paid to programmes that violate these rights.

An increase has been detected in the number of such messages as a result of user participation in forums and spaces created by the media on the internet and social media, as well as in captions for TV programmes. Many of these instances are protected by anonymity, making such conduct difficult to denounce.

According to Spanish Act 34/2002, on services of the information society and e-commerce (*Ley 34/2002, de 11 de julio, de servicios de la sociedad de la información y de comercio electrónico*), the media are editorially responsible for published content that contains comments and must therefore uphold fundamental rights, the only limit being free speech.

In discussions and debates, both on radio and television, the media should duly moderate and eliminate any messages that generally promote racism, incite hatred or violence, insult, defame or violate the dignity of the Roma people in particular. A responsible media company must raise awareness of and denounce examples of racist or discriminatory practices. Roma people should also be given the opportunity to express their opinion and exercise their right to reply and rectification, if necessary.

To uphold responsible free speech, all comments on public networks and different communication channels should identify the author of the comment.

2. Encourage training among professionals.

Media companies should provide their professionals with the training and specialisation required to ensure good quality news coverage, not only in relation to the Roma people but society in all its diversity.

3. Promote the inclusion of professionals from a range of backgrounds in the media.

One way to broaden the perspectives applied in a media company's work is by encouraging diversity among its workforce.

4. Establish mechanisms for self-regulation and compliance of the profession's codes of ethics

In addition to the obligation to comply with the sector's legal requirements, media companies should also be actively committed to the existing measures of self-regulation and co-regulation, as well as the profession's codes of ethics and guidelines.

The media should develop the necessary mechanisms to ensure compliance of the quality and ethical criteria established by the profession or by their stylebooks. This is the only way to guarantee rigorous, verified news coverage and content that avoids negative stereotypes and discriminatory language.

5. Take the utmost care to avoid reinforcing and spreading stereotypes.

In general, all radio and television providers should take the utmost care to avoid situations in their programmes that might help to spread and reinforce (negative) stereotypes of groups such as the Roma people which need more protection in terms of programme content, news and advertising.

Guidelines for the authorities

1. Adopt a responsible role as a source of information.

Every day, the media use official institutions and bodies as sources of information and the information provided by the latter must be verified, accurate, detailed and contextualised.

When reporting on events that may be criminal, the principle of presumed innocence must be upheld in all cases.

When a public institution, body or authority refers to the Roma community or to a Roma person, it must remember that the language used should be inclusive, should respect people's dignity, not be anecdotal or sensationalised and must not specifically mention the Roma ethnic group if this is not relevant.

2. Encourage training for press offices.

The staff working in the press offices of official institutions and bodies should be trained in how to duly handle information related to the Roma community.

3. Establish mechanisms to collaborate with audiovisual regulatory bodies.

Public authorities and audiovisual regulatory bodies should try to cooperate, together and with civil society, to further and uphold the right to true and diverse information, respect for human dignity and the constitutional principle of equality, not only for the Roma community but for the whole of society.

4. Help these guidelines to be disseminated as much as possible.

These guidelines should be disseminated among the educational community, professional press associations, university faculties, trade unions and other interested parties in society.

5. Urge audiovisual regulatory authorities to take these guidelines into account.

The regulatory authorities for audiovisuals in Spain and the respective autonomous communities must safeguard compliance of these guidelines in accordance with the powers and functions granted to them by the legislation in force.

Reference documentation

[Guia sobre el tractament de la diversitat cultural en els mitjans de comunicació.](#) Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya, 2013.

[Guía práctica para periodistas. Igualdad de trato, medios de comunicación y comunidad gitana.](#) Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2010.

[Guia de llenguatge inclusiu. Immigració, racisme i xenofòbia.](#) Mesa per a la Diversitat en l'Audiovisual, 2013.

[Guía de estilo para periodistas. ¿Cómo informar de colectivos en riesgo de exclusión?](#) Asociación Galega de Reporteiros Solidarios, 2011.

[Recomendaciones del Consejo del Audiovisual de Cataluña sobre el tratamiento informativo de la inmigración.](#) CAC, 2002.

[Periodisme per la pau i la convivència. Manual de bones pràctiques i recomanacions.](#) Movimiento por la Paz, 2014.

[Recommendation Rec \(2000\)23 Committee of Ministers to member states on the independence and functions of regulatory authorities for the broadcasting sector.](#) Consejo de Europa, 20 de diciembre de 2000.

[Recomendaciones del Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía sobre el tratamiento de la inmigración en los medios audiovisuales.](#) CAA, 2006. [Online]. [Consulted: 27 September 2017].

[Decisión 21/2013 del Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía sobre la difusión de comentarios xenófobos hacia el pueblo gitano en la página web de Cuatro.](#) CAA, 2013.

[Acord 25/2013 del Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya sobre la sèrie documental Palabra de gitano.](#) CAC, 2013.

Guide to inclusive language

INCORRECT	CORRECT	COMMENTS
Fixer	Elder	People respected in the community because of what they have done in their lives so that, in certain situations, their opinion is sought and/or they are asked to intervene when there is conflict.
Clan	Extended family Family group	A totally unsuitable term to refer to Roma families, this tends to be associated with criminal activity, especially drug trafficking. A traditional Roma family corresponds with the anthropological term of an extended family or family group, which includes a number of relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc.) in addition to the nuclear family.
Gypsies	Roma community	It is more appropriate to use the term <i>community</i> because this has family and/or cultural connotations, while the term <i>collective</i> suggests people are connected by professional or employment-related ties.

INCORRECT	CORRECT	COMMENTS
Integration	Social inclusion	The Roma community tends to dislike the term <i>integration</i> since, as full members of society and citizens in their own right, they have no need to become integrated. Moreover, the term implies losing or giving up aspects of one's own identity. In any case, both terms should be used to refer to people or groups at risk of becoming marginalised and not to the Roma community as a whole.
Multicultural	Intercultural	The term <i>intercultural</i> (co-existence of different cultural groups within the same area) is preferable to <i>multicultural</i> (co-existence of different social groups within the same area). Based on several commonly accepted cultural features shared by all groups, the different aspects of each group are promoted as an added value for society as a whole.
Patriarch	Elder	The term <i>patriarch</i> has negative connotations related to the mafia and crime. It's not a Roma term but started to be used instead of <i>elder</i> , which is the term used to refer to people with an exemplary record whose help is requested when the community needs advice or a mediator.
Gadje	Non-Roma	In the Roma community, other terms are also used such as <i>neighbour</i> , <i>friend</i> , <i>Spaniard</i> , etc. <i>Gadje</i> (also <i>Gadjo/Gadji</i>) is a Romani word used to refer to Europeans and is often derogatory in an English context.
Race	Ethnic group	All human beings belong to the same race. It is therefore more appropriate to use the term <i>ethnic group</i> as this refers to cultural rather than biological aspects.

INCORRECT	CORRECT	COMMENTS
Tribe	Family group	An incorrect term. A traditional Roma family corresponds with the anthropological term of an extended family or family group, which includes a number of relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc.) in addition to the nuclear family.
Xenophobia	Racism Discrimination	The term <i>xenophobia</i> is incorrect because it refers to the hatred or rejection of people because they are foreigners and the Roma are not foreigners. Some European organisations such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) suggest the term <i>racism</i> should be used to ensure that people who are incorrectly perceived as members of another race are protected by current legislation.

Organisations, associations and institutions

Promoted by

Federación Nacional de Asociaciones de Mujeres Gitanas Kamira
(Kamira Federation National Associations of Roma Women)

Participation

Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas Alboreá (Alboreá Association of Roma Women)

Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana (National Association of Roma Presence)

Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya (College of Journalists of Catalonia)

Comissions Obreres (trade union)

Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía (Audiovisual Council of Andalusia)

Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya (Catalan Audiovisual Council)

Federació d'Associacions Gitanes de Catalunya (Federation of Roma Associations of Catalonia)

Federación Autónoma de Asociaciones Gitanas de la Comunidad Valenciana
(Autonomous Federation of Roma Associations of the Community of Valencia)

Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias (Spanish Federation of
Municipalities and Provinces)

Fundació Privada Pere Closa (Pere Closa Private Foundation)

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Roma Secretariat Foundation)

Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades (Institute of Women
and Equal Opportunities)

Mesa per a la Diversitat en l'Audiovisual (Diversity in the Audiovisual Table)

Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia (Spanish Observatory for
Racism and Xenophobia)

Subdirección General para la Igualdad de Trato y la No Discriminación (General
Sub-Directorate for Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination)

Unión Romani (Romani Union)

Women's Link Worldwide



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