

GOOD PRACTICE OF ESTONIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE GOOD PRACTICE OF ERR?

The Good Practice is the set of principles on which the employees of Estonian Public Broadcasting have agreed.

The Good Practice refers to convictions that are ethical and relate to the society's sense of justice, and that the permanent and temporary employees of ERR proceed from (hereinafter referred to as the Employees).

The Good Practice focuses on adherence to the internationally recognised main principles of democratic journalism and describes the core values related to creation.

The Good Practice outlines the principles associated with reliability and makes it possible to maintain the good reputation of Public Broadcasting.

The Good Practice is a result of collective discussions and will be updated in creative practice. Technological development and changing social circumstances may result in the need to lay down new principles. This is why the Good Practice is a set of principles that is constantly updated.

Public Broadcasting can win the trust and respect of the audiences only if the public recognises the determined efforts of the ERR to rise above the interests of certain groups and cliques, and the attempts to portray reality as accurately and in as much detail as possible whilst defending the interests of everyone, not just the majority or the strong.

Pursuant to § 3 of the Estonian Public Broadcasting Act (EPBA), Public Broadcasting is independent in the production and transmission of its programmes, programme services and other media services.

WHAT DOES GOOD PRACTICE CONSIST OF?

Good Practice is the set of **principles** that the Employees of Public Broadcasting proceed from in their professional activities.

The Good Practice is also an example for ERR's partners (small producers) when they take part in the creation of the programmes and series of ERR or act for and on behalf of ERR in any other manner, and they are expected to adhere to it. The employment relationships of the Employees of ERR and representation of ERR are also related to the Good Practice.

The Good Practice also includes the **standards** that are mandatory in the ERR and that must be followed also by independent content creators who work for ERR.

The Good Practice also includes a description of **approaches** and **behaviour**, which are considered the most suitable and effective, but which cannot always be paid down as rules.

The Good Practice also includes the **guidelines** that the Employees could proceed from in their activities first of all.

The Good Practice also mentions the activities and principles that ERR **condemns** or tries to avoid in its activities.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADHERENCE TO GOOD PRACTICE?

All Employees of ERR, both journalists and providers of support services, work in the name of the best creative and professional result.

Achieving objectivity and balance in programmes and programme services as a whole is the duty of the managers of organisations in public law as well as every single Employee. These requirements are implemented when programmes are planned, created, procured, advertised and broadcast.

The persons who are first and foremost responsible for content are journalists, other creative employees and heads of creative structural units. Editorial managers and managers of higher levels are involved in the decision-making process in the event of disputes, especially in situations where conflict with the principles of the Good Practice is possible. This does not mean that the managers of sub-units have the right to change, adapt or abridge disputed materials without informing the journalist.

ERR guarantees its journalists legal advice in the interpretation of the Good Practice and the laws that regulate journalistic activities. Legal assistance is also guaranteed in cases where an ERR journalist has acted according to the Good Practice and law, but this activity has been disputed or questioned in any other manner by a third party. ERR protects itself and its journalists in disputes that question the trustworthiness or good reputation of ERR.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Good Practice has been worded pursuant to the values described in the development plan of ERR and on the basis of the principles that the creation of content is the most important activity of Public Broadcasting. The values described in the development plan are trustworthiness, independence, professionalism, openness, creative sustainability, innovation and efficiency. The Good Practice gives a more detailed description of independence, trustworthiness, openness and efficiency, and adds to them to values that relate to **professional creation**:

- trustworthiness (objectivity, also integrity, accuracy, diversity);
- independence (independence, also integrity);

- responsibility (also transparency, also empathy, also accuracy);
- skill (also professionalism, also creativity);
- good taste (tact, good use of language); and
- openness (also transparency, also appropriateness, also politeness);

The structure of the Good Practice is based on these values. A separate chapter is dedicated to each value.

1. TRUSTWORTHINESS

1.1 DEFINITION OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is one of the core values of an agency governed by public law in a democratic society.

The trustworthiness of Public Broadcasting is guaranteed by purposeful and appropriate work with creative ideas, information concerning reality and any sources of information. Trustworthiness emerges as a result of the confluence of various activities over a longer period and forms from the common everyday contribution made by people.

Trustworthiness means acting appropriately, i.e. making appropriate creative and journalistic choices and decisions in any situation. All circumstances relating to events or processes must be considered when they are reflected and all parties must be listened to – this relates to the principle of journalistic objectivity.

Trustworthiness calls for accuracy in journalistic activities and appropriateness in creative solutions. A journalist may not conceal or ignore information that they do not agree with or that they do not like. At the same time, a journalist has the right to refuse to reflect topics that are in contravention to their personal convictions.

As many different experts and commentators as possible must be found upon the discussion of topics that are recurring and constantly on the forefront. This guarantees a multitude of opinions and the widest possible coverage of the result.

In addition to the quality of content, trustworthiness is also influenced by the conduct of each and every employee of the Public Broadcasting in relations with the public and other organisations.

1.2 ACCURACY IN JOURNALISTIC ACTIVITIES

Journalists may freely choose their approach, specific form and guests within the scope of the topics and programme formats agreed in the editorial board.

Coverage of matters that represent news must be objective and diverse, and adequately but not overly emotional in order to make the topic understandable. Messages that are broadcast may not mislead the audiences.

The message given in news and other programmes that reflect reality must be based on facts. A journalist must collect information with due diligence and check it using at least two independent sources. References to sources must be clear and impersonal definitions of sources must be avoided.

Journalists working on news and topical shows may not use expressions or methods that would give reason to doubt their objectivity.

Journalists must find all persons concerned and the representatives of all positions, and introduce them in the news item or programme. The audiences must be informed of this if it proves to be impossible due to objective reasons.

Information that is obtained from a source that does not want to be named must be verified and it must be confirmed by at least one other independent source, and the sources must be known to the head of the editorial board. Source protection is professional ethical, in the future also a legal right, which relates to certain rights and obligations similar to the areas of activity of medical professionals, lawyers or notaries.

The principle of journalistic integrity requires that the identity of an interviewed person and their link to the topic are generally known to the public.

Public Broadcasting respects the copyright of persons and organisations, and always refers to the origin of information.

1.3 MULTIPLICITY OF TOPICS AND VIEWS

The presumption with regard to the requirement for multiplicity of topics is that content creators do not adapt their activities to the hypothetical interests of the audiences and do not just deal with topics that the majority of the audiences expect to be covered. The public is not regarded as a market where covering certain topics is more popular and exciting, and gives bigger numbers of viewers and listeners. ERR must not proceed from market pressure when selecting topics, but focus on the needs of the public instead. Recognising this need does not mean that the media organisation establishes a unilateral view of society, but demands the skill to handle as many areas as possible.

Introduction of different views and opinions must be as thorough as possible, and contain all important dimensions and levels.

The requirement for multiplicity of topics also means that the reasonable balance of international, national, regional and local news must be guaranteed in programmes.

Non-staff commentators are also employed by ERR in content creation in order to guarantee expert commentary and a broad scale of opinions, especially if the topic in question is controversial. The position and profession, membership and academic qualifications of the commentator must thereby be clearly indicated.

1.4 CORRECTION OF ERRORS

Public Broadcasting admits its errors and corrects them.

Apologies are given to persons about whom incorrect or false information was given. Refusing to correct errors and/or apologise threatens the trustworthiness of ERR.

The journalist who made the error submits the correction with an apology at as soon as possible. If this is not possible due to the work schedule or any other circumstance, the correction and the apology are presented by the editorial board as soon as possible.

Factual errors must be corrected clearly and as quickly as possible. An apology and an explanation of the reasons of what happened are presented in the case of a technical error. All errors are subject to be logged and they must always be analysed.

Errors that occur because the Good Practice is ignored or the law is breached are processed at the level of the Council of Ethics, the Legal Department and the Management Board, and the results of the proceedings are disclosed on the website of ERR and also on air in the event of heightened public interest.

2. INDEPENDENCE

2.1 DEFINITION OF INDEPENDENCE

Independence means that the Employees, especially the journalists, must in their activities avoid everything that may cause justified doubts about the objectivity of ERR. The activities and conduct of the Employees must not leave the public with the impression that an employee personally or ERR is subjected to pressure by a certain group of stakeholders. The pressure may be either ideological, political, economic, religious or cultural. For example, the independence of REE may come under threat if a journalist demonstrates their

consumption preferences publicly either on air or in a newspaper. The journalists of ERR must in their professional activities also avoid publicly displaying their allegiance to political parties, associates or societies, and other interest groups.

The principle of independence requires that irrespective of who funds the programme series (state budget, national funds, other institutions), ERR must maintain its independence in journalistic work, creative choices and planning (granting) air time.

Independence also means that journalists do not let themselves be influenced by the reactions of different parties to programmes. Persons who have been severely criticised must thereby be given the opportunity to respond as soon as possible or on a suitable programme.

Above all, ERR serves the interests of the public. Journalists must keep their professional distance with all representatives of power whilst also treating all of them equally.

2.2 PRINCIPLES OF OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE

The requirement for objectivity and balance arises mainly from the fact that in its programmes, programme series and other media services, ERR must guarantee that the processes taking place in society are covered in a manner that is independent, objective and diverse in order to support a democratic discussion.

ERR must ensure the broadest possible scale of visions and opinions in order to achieve balance and objectivity.

The objectivity requirement does not restrict a journalist's freedom of expression and does not mean that they must make programmes that are neutral and do not reflect the author's position. Programmes must reflect the different aspects and associations of problems whilst avoiding common stereotypes and prejudices. Two different principles can be applied to achieve balance:

The **principle of air time balance** is applied in programmes where representatives of political parties are used. When dealing with important, and in particular with controversial issues of internal, foreign, social and economic politics, ERR must guarantee that equal air time is allocated to the representatives of different political parties on programme series.

Principle of objectivity and balance of series allows for the manner a topic is discussed to be balanced within the scope of a series or cycle of programmes. In a case like this the series or cycle is regarded as a complete part of the programme, which gathers the different aspects of one topic or interrelated shows under the same headline. If single shows are turned into a series or cycle in order to achieve objectivity, this must be explained to the public.

Parties whose positions conflict each other's often do not want to appear on the same show; in a case like this, the topic may be handled on several shows whilst implementing the principles of objectivity and balance of a series.

Important opinions may not divide according to political party positions. It is not imperative that the representatives of all political parties participate when political topics are discussed. The obligation to guarantee the required objectivity does not apply so much to the representation of political parties, but the need to highlight the most important opinions and positions regarding contradictory problems of internal, foreign, social and economic politics and issues of public life.

2.3 PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION

A journalist is more than a passionless intermediary; they have to create journalistic added value with their work. A journalist may express their professional journalistic opinion that is based on facts.

When deciding on the importance of an event, the journalists of ERR do not have to proceed from whether and how other media organisations deal with the same topic. Journalists must be able to distinguish real events from media events and PR materials.

Journalists should never leave the impression that they are prejudiced about the topic they are discussing. The public must recognise that the opinions of journalists are based on actual circumstances and facts, and are not affected by emotions.

In order to avoid the possibility that a journalist is influenced to make a certain conclusion, they must be healthily sceptical about any information, carefully check the trustworthiness of their sources and obtain proof from other sources involved in the case.

It may happen that the questions or professional opinions of journalists irritate the people who are interested in the topic and who have their own interests and positions. In this case we should not forget the fact that working as a journalist is not always pleasant.

2.4 SPONSORSHIP AND CHARITY

According to the Public Broadcasting Act, ERR does not broadcast advertisements, incl. surreptitious advertising – this means drawing attention to specific products, services or companies without a valid reason.

ERR prepares radio, TV or online broadcasts of sports and cultural projects and events that generate considerable public interest. If the broadcasting rights include the obligation to transmit the advertisements or sponsorship information of the supporters of a sports or cultural project or event, then this may be done in exceptional cases with the prior permission of the Public Broadcasting Council.

Free information messages about events can be broadcast on ERR's shows by cultural, sports and research institutions if they belong to the state or a local government, or operate as a non-profit organisation or foundation. Social messages and invitations are also broadcast free of charge.

ERR applies for and uses support from public funds and programmes created for specific purposes to create its shows. ERR excludes support whereby the donor of the money wants to decide on the content and creative choices of the show. The names of sponsors must be indicated in the case of sponsored shows.

2.5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Employees of ERR may be members of political parties, the union, professional associations and other social movements, but they must proceed from the values and goals of ERR in their work and activities that may be associated with ERR.

A conflict of interest may occur when the personal interests of an ERR Employee or the interests of persons (family members, friends) and interest groups (membership or relation to companies, social organisations, civil movements) related to them end up in conflict with the goals or values of ERR.

In such a case the Employee informs their line manager or Collegiate Decision-Making Council and coordinates the choices to be made with them in order to guarantee the correct decision proceeding from the goals and interests of ERR.

Employees must refuse to accept the gifts or benefits offered by interest groups, which relate to their official positions. The goal of these offers may be to achieve a more favourable attitude than usual, or the making of a decision that meets the expectations of the interest group.

The Employees of ERR must never use their official position in personal interests and thereby threaten the reputation and trustworthiness of ERR.

The Employees may generally not do extra work in organisations that ERR considers to be its competitors. The Employees of ERR may also not use their professional skills for training employees of competitors in their spare time. Scientific research, conferences or training organised by ERR are exceptions.

Using ERR's name, intellectual property, premises and technical equipment as well as their working time in the interests of other organisations or interest groups is not permitted. Show hosts (including non-staff ones) may not wear clothes with trademarks, product or service logos or advertisements or invitations presented in the format of text when performing on screen (except the trademarks of ERR).

3. RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 DEFINITION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility means empathy and sensitivity about surrounding reality and the discussions emerging and developing in society. All important topics that emerge in society must be covered in public broadcasting. The purpose of collecting and broadcasting news is to offer the broadest possible access to information and allow people to form their own opinions about certain topics.

Covert methods of data collection may only be used if they are lawful, based on the principles of justice and privacy, and it is absolutely certain that the information to be obtained is necessary in the interests of the public. Fraud may not be used to obtain information – the journalists of ERR may not introduce themselves under a false name or hide their true objectives. A hidden camera or microphone may be used in exceptional cases on the responsibility of the head of the editorial board. A consent like this may only be granted if the collected information serves an important purpose and is in public interest, and cannot be obtained in a public manner.

3.2 PRIVACY OF PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND PUBLIC INTEREST

ERR generally proceeds from the principle of privacy and distinguishes between public interest and the thirst for scandal. The activities of individuals are dealt with within the framework that guarantees the person's right to privacy, but at the same time allows us to investigate and clarify circumstances about which there is public interest.

Discussing things that concern private life is justified in the case of certain people if the person's private life becomes a part of their public life or there is justified public interest in the person's private life.

Public figures are first and foremost persons that exercise public authority or work in positions that may influence political, business and social choices. However, it must be distinguished when a person exercises public authority (e.g. delivers a work-related speech) and when they act within the limits of their private life (e.g. takes their children to the zoo). In the latter case, they are not obliged to tolerate publicity more than any other person.

The family members of public figures are not public figures. Also, every famous, notorious or well-known person is not a public figure in the legal sense.

Materials that breach a person's privacy are published only if public interest outweighs the right of a person to privacy.

There may be situations where person cannot or may not be identified. Identification does not mean just the publication of a person's phone, but also the publication of their photo or any other data that make it possible to identify the person (voice, outline, any features characteristic to the person, etc.).

Everyone has the right to refuse to be interviewed or to participate in a show in any other manner. If the audiences want to know why a person or an organisation is not represented on a show and their interest in this is justified, then the reason must be explained to them.

It must be carefully considered whether public interest is more important than a person's privacy if the activities of persons that are being investigated by the police or other investigative bodies (persons who have not been convicted with a court order that has entered into force) are covered. Legal facts must be presented accurately. A journalist must base their story on the principle that a person is presumed innocent until the court order enters into force.

3.3 COVERING EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS

The presentation and mediation of statements and invitations to protests, strikes, pickets and other mass action in news broadcasts and other shows must be avoided. The presentation and mediation of invitations to charity or civil action is also thoroughly considered in ERR.

Journalists must distance themselves from any actions and their organisers in terms of their work. Demonstrations, strikes, charity and joint action must be regarded like any other event. It must be kept in mind that many public actions, incl. charity ones, are organised in the hope that media channels will participate in them.

No proposals may be made to demonstrators that could lead to events being staged.

Quick journalistic reaction is justified in the case of public unrest. It must be kept in mind that the presence of ERR may not cause even bigger provocation or unrest.

In the case of events involving hostage-taking, the journalists of ERR must make sure that their actions do not put the lives of the hostages under bigger threat and that they do not interfere with the attempts to free the hostages safely.

Creating panic must be avoided when accidents are covered, but forwarding relevant information is important and necessary. Information has an organising, political and emotional role in a crisis. **Organising role** means publication of information that helps organise the actions necessary in a crisis; **political role** means journalistic treatment of the reasons, guilty persons and liability; and **emotional role** means covering the consequences, suffering and in some cases also the mourning.

ERR broadcasts the official announcements and practical information given by the Rescue Service, Police, *Riigikogu*, President of the Republic and Government of the Republic in the cases of crises and threats.

3.4 INTERRUPTION OF SHOWS

Shows may be interrupted only in highly exceptional cases. ERR has the right to immediately inform the public of exceptional events without waiting for the start of the next news show.

Announcements given on radio and online reach large audiences fast and this is why these channels must be preferred when giving very important information about traffic, exceptional events, weather and forwarding other exceptional announcements fast and accurately.

3.5 COVERING CRIME AND VIOLENCE

When crimes are covered, it must be kept in mind that ‘suspect’, ‘witness’ and ‘convicted offender’ do not mean the same thing and a person must be presumed innocent until convicted in a court of law.

Victims of crime must be treated with special care and attention. Use of photographic material that depicts helpless victims of crime and causes unease must be avoided. Disclosing details that may reveal the identity of the victim, such as license plate and house numbers, etc., must be avoided.

The archived material concerning previous crimes may not be used to illustrate another crime in a manner that allows for them to be identified.

When violence and crimes are covered in artistic shows, it must be kept in mind that certain types of activity may get imitated – violence must not turn into an example.

Particular attention must be paid to the discussion of violence on children’s shows.

3.6 TOPICS THAT CONCERN CHILDREN

Involving children in shows and covering topics that concern children must be done with particular caution. Many competing interests may be related to children: the interest of children, parents or guardians, and public interest. The permission of a parent or guardian is usually enough to involve children, but the journalist must still consider whether or not involving the child in the show is in the child’s interest. Doing this is even more important if the child is small and the topic sensitive.

Depicting children in relation to topical problems on news and topical shows must be done with caution. The long-term interests of a child usually call for preservation of the child’s

anonymity. The consent of the parent is usually not a sufficient argument for revealing the child's identity in cases like this.

It must be kept in mind that children are easily influenced by questions when a child is being interviewed. Small children in particular may find it difficult to separate reality from fantasy.

The identity of the child may not be revealed (the child may not be identifiable, incl. on the basis of their age, kindergarten, school, home or any other date) in the event of court cases involving children (where a minor is either a witness or being charged with an offence).

4.1 DEFINITION OF MASTERY

Mastery means making the most of one's creative capability, choosing the most appropriate methods and formats to cover any situation or process, and achieving the best possible result in creation. The public must understand the nature of information as well as the related reasons and conclusions.

The journalists of ERR must be able to connect the concerns and interests of all social groups when creating content, and they must thereby avoid the creation of stereotypes and the situation where the society that is being described that does not actually exist.

Professional coverage of reality should not cause prejudice (e.g. the opinion that all pensioners are helpless, all rich people are bad or all politicians are stupid).

4.2 MASTERY IN BROADCASTING NEWS

News are one of the most important areas of journalism. News must be clear, accurate and easy to prove. News may not contain commentary or excessive emotions.

When the subjective opinion of a journalist is presented, it must be made clear to the audiences that this is the journalist's opinion. It is not appropriate for a journalist of ERR to present their subjective opinion only about a few and so-called recurring topics. Subjective commentary presented during a certain period of time must be balanced as a set and based on the principle that as many different views as possible must be represented.

Reportage is a detailed description of events and processes. The role of the reporter is to cover what is going on as accurately, objectively and honestly as possible. The description of context and details must be relevant and adequate.

4.3 INTERVIEWS AND DEBATES

Interview is a dialogue that is carried out for the purposes of journalism or entertainment. **Debate** is a public discussion that has more than one participant (the interviewee) and that takes place within the framework of a show.

An interview and a debate both have a host (the interviewer), who is responsible for the content of the show. In general, the host is the representative of the listeners and the viewers in the case of both an interview and a debate, who asks questions that are important for the general public. The interviewer should avoid looking partial because of a careless choice of words or the tone of their voice. Being too familiar or 'matey' with the interviewee also raises questions about the neutrality of the interviewer. It is always advisable to remain formal during an interview, even if the interviewee is a good acquaintance. Being informal is justified only if a colleague is being interviewed.

Interviewers must treat their guests fairly. They may not be highly critical or demanding with regard to some guests whilst being too amicable and accommodating with regard to others. The interviewer may not get personal or too emotional in the discussion of topics. The interviewee must not be belittled or patronised.

Persons who are interviewed as witnesses or experts should be encouraged rather than attacked or provoked.

Sometimes it happens that not all intended guests can or want to participate in a show. If the journalists believes that it is necessary to point out the absence of a guest, they must do it appropriately and in accordance with the actual reasons of the person's absence.

The interviewee must be informed of the content of the interview in advance, and they must also be informed of the purpose for which the interview will be used. The interviewee must also be informed about the approximate length of the interview, and it must be made clear that the given length is only approximate and that there may be cases where the interview will not be used. An interviewee who responds to criticism must be given the chance to respond to all of the important points that the criticism contained.

A recorded interview must be treated with integrity if it is edited later on.

In the case of telephone interviews, it must be kept in mind that the interviewee may not realise that their responses are being recorded or broadcast live. Permission to record the interview must be clearly requested from the interviewee and they must be informed if the interview is carried out live on air.

4.4 EDITING AND ROLE OF EDITOR

Editing means everything done with text, picture or sound during and after recording.

When interviews are edited, the questions and answers may not be edited in such a manner that the initial meaning of the answers changes. The answers given in one context must not be edited into another context.

Listeners and viewers may not be misled and made to believe that there was conversation between people when such a conversation was not recorded and such questions were actually not asked.

When archived material is used, it must be done with clear references to the place and the period of time that the material originates from. Archived materials must not be used to illustrate events in a manner that misleads the general public.

Using the same material constantly in news and topical shows to illustrate different topics may be misleading, especially if persons can be recognised in video material.

The impact of special effects and virtual models of events (both in video and audio) must be carefully analysed in journalistic content, as they may raise questions about the accuracy and integrity of the information. Every reconstruction or simulation must be as similar as possible to the event it is trying to portray. Staged situations may not be presented as documentary material.

Journalistic video material must be edited in such a manner that the viewer gets a realistic and comprehensive view of what actually happened. Certain angles may emphasise or reduce the position of the discussed persons or actually convey a hidden message. For example, using a close-up has a psychological impact. Slowing down or accelerating movements may also carry a journalistic message and express a subjective position. It must be kept in mind that all parties on a show must be depicted with the same visual approach.

It must be clearly noted when reconstruction is used on YV shows so that viewers can clearly understand which material is authentic and which is staged.

Using telephone interviews in news shows too frequently is not condoned.

4.5 STAGING OR CREATING PARODIES OF NEWS

Any parodies or made-up news that are used on any show must be made or marked in such a manner that there is no justified reason to consider them real.

It is not appropriate for newsreaders and reporters who usually make news shows to appear in parodies of news or present made-up news.

Interviewees used in news and topical shows must have the reassurance that interviews with them are used in the context in which they were given. The same applies when archived news are used.

5. GOOD TASTE

5.1 DEFINITION OF GOOD TASTE

Good taste related to the values generally accepted in society that exclude vulgarity, banality and details of sexual behaviour. The general public consists of different groups, which means that the understanding of good taste may differ on a large scale. This is why public broadcasting cannot proceed from the same freedom or verbal or visual freedom of expression as publishers, theatre or film art. Public broadcasting must make sure that its activities do not create unreasonable unease in a certain social group.

5.2 EXTREME EMOTIONS

Extreme emotions relate to the aspects of human activities that are considered to be deeply private.

Detailed naked or erotic scenes are permitted only if they are essential for the presentation of information or for emphasising an artistic message. Depicting scenes like that cannot be a goal in itself, they cannot be used to shock people or create a sensation.

Mourning and suffering must be covered with particular care – it must be done with discretion and briefly. Mourning cannot be used for the purposes of sensation.

If a content product contains material that may disturb some members of the general public (especially children), then warning messages about this must be given before or during the show.

Discussion of elderly people should above all promote respect for such people.

5.3 LANGUAGE CULTURE

As the public broadcasting corporation, ERR treats the Estonian language and the culture of expression with care. The persons who permanently appear in ERR's programmes use spoken language in a manner that is clear, pertains to content, can be understood by people and complies with the important trends of Estonian language arrangement and language maintenance. Hosts and reports have a command of different styles of communication – they are able to choose language tool according to the type of the show and the communication environment without erring against generally accepted language taste. Use of language that is characterised by vulgarity and profanity is not accepted in ERR, including in subtitles and in the presentation of information graphically.

6. OPENNESS

According to the definition of a legal entity governed by public law and pursuant to the Estonian Public Broadcasting Act, all decisions considering the economic activities as well as the journalistic and creative choices of the ERR are public, comments about them must be made to the public, and they must be justified if necessary.

Only new shows and series that are under preparation and changes in schedules are not subject to disclose before they enter into force, and no comments must be made with regard to them.

ERR is open to constructive criticism and grateful for all reasoned and non-anonymous expressions of opinion. The ability to analyse its own creations in a critical manner (so-called self-reflection) is also important for ERR. Shows and programmes are analysed in different creative councils and also in the public advisory board that unites opinion leaders from different areas. ERR uses experts and volunteers among listeners and viewers to assess its shows, and they take part in surveys of the quality of shows. Creative councils (programme councils) assess shows on the basis of the so-called principle of perceptible consensus, which means that the position that will be phrased must be suitable for the majority of council members.

ERR pays attention to the opinions of its audiences and other members of society, and is never derogatory about persons who express their opinions. ERR justifies its choices and positions if necessary.

In its relationships with partners, ERR first and foremost considers the values of ERR: trustworthiness and independence. Contracts are entered into on the principle of equality, integrity and transparency. Contracts entered into in the interests of the general public must generally be public. This requirement may be waived if this is demanded by the other party to the contract, who refers to the need to protect personal data from disclosure or defend business interests.

Annex 1

Presentation of research and election results

Reflecting research is closely related to the trustworthiness of the media organisation. Correct use of relevant and appropriate research data supports ERR's trustworthiness; incomplete and doubtful research data may reduce it.

It is advisable to use research as background information rather than a direct source of news.

ERR goes not quote or refer to online and telephone surveys in its news and topical shows if the sample of the survey is not sufficiently representative.

If telephone surveys or surveys carried out on the websites of ERR are used, it is important to recognise and inform the audiences that the responses only represent the attitudes of the respondents and cannot be used to characterise the entire population.

Presentation of election results where the source is not the National Electoral Committee requires considerable caution. The following principles must be considered:

- news cannot be based on the results of pre-election surveys alone;
- the questions used in the survey must also be considered in the interpretation of survey results;
- survey results must be presented in the context of general trends. Trends may be based on the results of all major surveys carried out in a certain period of time;
- survey results that ignore the trends without convincing explanations must be treated with scepticism and caution;
- survey results should not be excessively magnified using the expressions "survey indicates" or "survey proves"; and
- the time and the conditions when and where the survey was conducted (e.g. the events that may have had a strong impact on public opinion) must be clearly highlighted.